Al-Mīzān

An Exegesis of the Qur'an

ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī

Translated by: Alexander Khaleeli

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In the Name of Allah,
the Beneficent, the Merciful.

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds;
the Beneficent, the Merciful;
the Master of the Day of Judgment;
Thee only we serve, and to Thee alone we beseech
for help;
Guide us in the straight path;
The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed
favors,not of those against whom Thou art
wrathful, nor of those who are astray.

O' Allah! send Your blessings to the head of
Your messengers and the last of
Your prophets,
Muḥammad and his pure and cleansed progeny.
Also send Your blessings to all Your
prophets and envoys.

Contents

Publisher's Note vi
Foreword vii

Chapter 12 (Sūrah Yūsuf)

Verses 58–62 1
Verses 63-82 6
Verses 83–92 30
    Examining Narrations 39
Verses 93–102 46
    Examining Narrations 56
    On the Story of Joseph 62
    An Excursus on the Nature of Dreams 76
Verses 103-111 83
    Examining Narrations 92

Chapter 13 (Sūrah al-Ra'd)

Verses 1-4 95
    Introduction 95
    Commentary 97
    Examining Narrations 110
Verses 5-6 112
    Examining Narrations 119
Verses 7–16 120
    Examining Narrations 151
Verses 17–26 159
    Examining Narrations 180
Verses 27–35 185
    Examining Narrations 208
Verses 36–42 214
    Examining Narrations 226
Verse 43 231
    Examining Narrations 237

About the Author 240

Arabic Transliteration Key

Arabic Letters	Transliteration	Arabic Letters	Transliteration
ا	ā	ع	ʿ
ب	b	غ	gh
ت	t	ف	f
ث	th	ق	q
ج	j	ك	k
ح	ḥ	ل	l
خ	kh	م	m
د	d	ن	n
ذ	dh	ه	h
ر	r	و	w/ū
ز	z	ى	y/ī
س	s	ء	ʾ
ش	sh	ة	ah
ص	ṣ	ـَ	a
ض	ḍ	ـَ	i
ط	ṭ	ـُ	u
ظ	ẓ		

Publisher's Note

To enhance the readability of the text for English-speaking readers, the editors have opted to employ English names for the prophets and figures (including those listed below and others) and to utilize Anglicized terms that are now recognized in English dictionaries.

Ādam	Adam	Mūsā	Moses
Dāwūd	David	Sulaymān	Solomon
Hārūn	Aaron	Shuʿayb	Jethro
Ibrāhīm	Abraham	Yaʿqūb	Jacob
ʿĪsā	Jesus	ʾAyyūb	Job
Isḥāq	Isaac	Yūnus	Jonah
Ismāʿīl	Ishmael	Yūsuf	Joseph
Jibrāʾīl	Gabriel	Zakariyyā	Zachariah
Lūt	Lot	ʿUzayr	Ezra

Arabic terms and names have been transliterated according to the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (*IJMES*).

For ease of reading, glyphs and traditional honorifics such as "peace be upon him" or which are commonly used as a gesture of respect after the name of the Prophet Muhammad, the Imāms, or other sacred figures have been omitted from this text. No disrespect is intended, and may God's peace and blessings be upon them all!

Foreword

Tafsīr al-Mīzān by ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī stands as a monumental endeavor, unraveling the divine tapestry woven into the verses of the Qur'an. This current volume, with keen scholarly precision, navigates through the complex currents of the latter verses of Chapter 12 and the full expanse of Chapter 13, aiming to crystallize the essence of divine revelation and the unwavering truth of the Prophetic message for the contemporary seeker of wisdom.

In the previous volume, we set forth on a journey of deep reflection through the narratives of Chapter 12. Now, as we traverse the landscape of Chapter 13, we encounter a surah that robustly challenges the skepticism of the Prophet's contemporaries. They questioned the absence of palpable signs to affirm his prophecy, yet the surah directs them, and us, to perceive the universe itself as a celestial sign of the divine narrative.

This volume endeavors to do more than translate; it strives to transcend linguistic and cultural barriers, to transfer the wisdom of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī's exposition into the hearts of those who yearn for understanding. We have endeavored to preserve the original Arabic's eloquence and depth, providing clarity and accessibility through the English language.

In Chapter 13, we encounter a mosaic of divine messages that touch on the subtleties of faith and the human condition. The surah speaks metaphorically of rain descending from the heavens, symbolizing the divine grace that nurtures the human soul. It reminds us of the tranquility that comes from remembrance of Allah—a testament to the spiritual peace found in faith. It speaks of the Mother Book, the repository of ultimate truth, and reaffirms that all planning is subject to the divine will, urging us to yield to the celestial wisdom that governs existence.

To this intricate and profound discourse, ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī adds a luminous pearl of insight regarding the final verse of Chapter 13, which states: 'Allah suffices as a witness between me and you, and he who possesses the knowledge of the Book.' (13:43). This statement is one of the best pieces of evidence, according to ʿAllāmah, that the verse, and thereby the chapter, is of Meccan origin. He elucidates how this verse, referencing

the vast knowledge bestowed upon ʿAli, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, serves as a testament to his role as the most knowledgeable in the community regarding the Book of God. This claim is fortified by numerous authentic reports and particularly by the renowned *Hadith al-Thaqalayn*, which underscores the inseparable nature of the Qur'an and the Prophet's progeny in guiding the ummah.

Our translation and commentary invite readers to engage in a dialogue with history, to reflect upon the destinies of bygone nations, and to immerse themselves in the continuity of the Prophetic message. It is an invitation to contemplate the signs within ourselves and the cosmos, recognizing in them the majesty of the Creator.

The lens provided by ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī allows for a profound examination of the historical and spiritual context of the Qur'an, revealing the timeless and universal truths it holds. His commentary lays bare the thematic coherence from the surah's opening verses, affirming the Qur'an's truth, to its conclusive declaration of the Prophet's legitimacy as a divine messenger.

As this volume is presented to the world, our aspiration is that it becomes a vessel for intellectual and spiritual enrichment. May it stir reflection, deepen understanding of the Qur'an, and act as a beacon for those seeking guidance. We pray it becomes a treasured companion to all who journey through its pages, illuminating the path toward the essence of divine wisdom.

In embarking on this scholarly and spiritual odyssey, may the insights gleaned be as timeless as the sacred text itself. And may the wisdom contained herein resonate within the hearts and minds of readers, fostering a profound connection with the divine message intended to guide humanity.

Tawheed Institute Australia Ltd.
December 2023

Chapter 12

Sūrah Yūsuf (Joseph)

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بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

Verses 58–62

This section of verses recounted the part from the story of Joseph when his brothers come to Egypt during the years of famine to purchase food for Jacob's household. This was a prelude to Joseph retaining his maternal brother—the envied one referred to in God's words recounted by the brothers, *'Surely Joseph and his brother are dearer to our father than us, though we are a hardy group'* (12:8). This would subsequently lead to him revealing his real identity to them and relocating Jacob's household from their pastoral lands to Egypt.

Joseph initially concealed his identity because he intended to bring his brother from the same mother to join him in Egypt at his side. He wanted to observe his paternal brothers when revealing himself, to see how God would manifest His will due to their earlier jealousy and ill-treatment of him, and then bring all of them back together as a family. The subsequent five verses relate the entry of Joseph's brothers into Egypt, his proposition to them to bring their half-brother if they return to purchase food, their hesitance, and eventual acceptance.

وَجَآءَ إِخۡوَةُ يُوسُفَ فَدَخَلُواْ عَلَيۡهِ فَعَرَفَهُمۡ وَهُمۡ لَهُۥ مُنكِرُونَ ٥٨

(12:58) The brothers of Joseph came and entered his presence. He recognized them, but they did not recognize him.

This verse omits much detail: Only the essentials are presented here because the main focus is not on the specifics of the events, but rather on

Joseph's reunion with his maternal brother, the blessings and divine favor they both shared, and the eventual recognition of Joseph by the others. This is but a chosen excerpt of his story and the events following his rise to power in Egypt.

The brothers that visited him, excluding his maternal brother, formed a group. Jacob had become deeply attached to the latter, keeping him away from the brothers after the incident with Joseph many years before, evidence of which will be apparent in the upcoming verses.

Between this visit to their brother Joseph and his appointment over the land's granaries and ascension to power in Egypt after his prison release, more than seven years had elapsed. They only came to him during the years of famine that were affecting the whole region, after the seven plentiful years had passed. They hadn't seen him since they sold him to the caravan, after retrieving him from the well when he was still a young boy. Years had passed while he was in the house of Potiphar, followed by several years in prison. He had been in charge of the granaries for over seven years and was now appearing in front of them in the attire of an Egyptian official. They never suspected him to be a Hebrew man, not of Egyptian descent. All this prevented them from recognizing him as their long lost brother. However, through his own sagacity or possibly through prophetic insight, he knew them as soon as he saw them. God stated, *The brothers of Joseph came and entered his presence. He recognized them, but they did not recognize him.*

وَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُم بِجَهَازِهِمْ قَالَ ائْتُونِي بِأَخٍ لَّكُم مِّنْ أَبِيكُمْ أَلَا تَرَوْنَ أَنِّي أُوفِي الْكَيْلَ وَأَنَا خَيْرُ الْمُنزِلِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾

(12:59) When he had furnished them with their provision (*jahhaza-hum bi-jihāza-hum*), he said, 'Bring me a brother that you have through your father. Do you not see that I give the full measure and that I am the best of hosts?

In his *Mufradāt*, al-Rāghib writes: '*Jihāz* ('provision') refers to supplies and the like, while *tajhīz* (from whence *jahhaza* is derived) means to carry or send such supplies.' Hence, the meaning is: 'Once he had provided them with the supplies and food that he sold to them, he instructed them to bring their brother from their father, saying, *"Bring me..."*'

Regarding his saying, '*Do you not see that I give the full measure ...*?'

this means: 'Do I do you not see that I do not give short measure, nor do I wrong you, relying on my power and might to do as I please.'

And that I am the best of hosts means: 'I am the most generous host and provide the best lodging.'

Together, this is an encouragement for them to return to him and to bring their brother from their father. Just as his statement in the following verse, '*But if you do not bring him to me, then there will be no rations for you with me, and do not come near me*,' is a threat to them so that they do not disobey his command. Similarly, their response in the subsequent verse, *'We will solicit him from his father. We will surely do'* is their acceptance of this and an attempt to reassure Joseph.

It is clear that Joseph's command upon their departure, '*Bring me a brother that you have through your father ...*' with the emphasis, inducement, and threats, isn't something he would introduce without some prelude or setting which would blind them to the fact that he was Joseph or give them any suspicious thoughts about his intentions. This is evident. Commentators have introduced numerous dialogues and interactions into the story, for which there is no foundation in God's account of the story in the Qur'an, nor any evidence that supports such interpretations given the context.

God's narration does not contain any such details. All that can be inferred from it is that he inquired about their affairs, and they, being ten brothers, informed him that they had another brother who stayed with their father, from whom their father could not bear to be separated for travel or any other reason. This made the governor (Joseph) wish for them to bring that brother to him so he could see him.

فَإِن لَّمْ تَأْتُونِى بِهِۦ فَلَا كَيْلَ لَكُمْ عِندِى وَلَا تَقْرَبُونِ ﴿٦٠﴾

(12:60) 'But if you do not bring him to me, then there will be no rations (*kayl*) for you with me, and do not come near me.'

The term *kayl* ('rations') here refers to the measured amount, which is provisions. 'And do not come near me' means they shall not approach him, nor will they be allowed to enter his land or present themselves to purchase food. The meaning of this verse is evident: he is warning them of consequences if they do not obey his command, as previously mentioned.

قَالُواْ سَنُرَاوِدُ عَنْهُ أَبَاهُ وَإِنَّا لَفَاعِلُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

(12:61) They said, 'We will solicit him from his father (*sa-nurāwid ʿan-hu abā-hu*). We will surely do.'

As mentioned previously, the verb *murāwada* (from whence *nurāwid* is derived) means to persistently return to a matter and to use earnest supplications in pursuit of it. Their statement to Joseph, 'We shall try to persuade his father,' indicates they relayed to him the story of how their father deeply loves this brother and is not willing to be separated from him, whether for a journey or any absence. Their use of the term 'his father' instead of 'our father' reinforces this sentiment.

Their statement, '*We will surely do*,' means they committed to bringing this brother or to persuading their father to let him travel with them to meet Joseph. The meaning of this verse is clear. In it, they are essentially reassuring Joseph and providing him with guarantees, as mentioned previously.

وَقَالَ لِفِتْيَانِهِ اجْعَلُواْ بِضَاعَتَهُمْ فِي رِحَالِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْرِفُونَهَا إِذَا انقَلَبُواْ إِلَى أَهْلِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

(12:62) He said to his servants (*fityāni-hi*), 'Put their capital (*biḍāʿata-hu*) in their saddlebags (*riḥāli-him*). Maybe they will recognize it when they return (*inqalabū*) to their folks, and maybe they will come back.'

The term *fityān* refers to young boys or attendants. Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī says: '*Biḍāʿa* ('capital') is a considerable portion of wealth acquired for trading. God says: "*This is our money* (biḍāʿatu-nā)*, restored to us!*" (12:65), and "*a meager sum* (bi-biḍāʿa muzjāt)" (12:88). The original term for this is derived from a word meaning a piece or a chunk, often of meat... the related term *bidʿ* refers to a sum less than ten, and according to some, more than three or five.' There are several definitions and uses for the *biḍāʿa*, but in this context, it signifies the commodities they had brought to trade for food in Egypt. *Riḥāl* ('saddlebags') are containers or baggage for carrying goods. *Inqalabū* (lit. 'overturning' but translated here as 'return') refers to the act of returning home.

Therefore, the meaning of this verse is: 'Joseph instructed his attendants to place their commodities, which they had brought as payment for the food they purchased, back into their saddlebags. Perhaps, when they return to their families and open these containers, they will recognize their goods and possibly decide to return to him. This act might win over their hearts, enticing them to come back, anticipating more acts of kindness and generosity."

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Verses 63-82

This section of verses relates the return of Joseph's brothers to their father and their efforts to persuade him to send Benjamin, Joseph's full brother, to obtain further provisions from Egypt. This is followed by an account of their subsequent visit to Joseph and Joseph's maneuver to keep Benjamin with him.

فَلَمَّا رَجَعُوا إِلَىٰ أَبِيهِمْ قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا مُنِعَ مِنَّا الْكَيْلُ فَأَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا أَخَانَا نَكْتَلْ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

(12:63) So when they returned to their father, they said, 'Father, the measure has been withheld from us, so let our brother go with us so that we may obtain the measure (*naktal*), and we will indeed take care of him.'

Iktiyāl (from whence the verb *naktal* is obtained) refers to procuring food in quantities by measure. Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī says: '*Kayl* signifies the act of measuring out food. There is a distinction between the phrases '*kaltu lahu al-ṭa'ām*' and '*kaltuhu al-ta'am*.' The former means that I was directly involved in the act of measuring the food for him, whereas the latter implies that I gave him food using a measure or scale. The phrase '*iktilatu 'alayh*' means that I took from him using a measure. God says: '*Woe to the defrauders who use short measures, who, when they measure from the people, take the full measure, but diminish when they measure or weigh for them*' (83:1–3).

When they say, *'Father, the measure has been withheld from us ...,'* this implies that if they did not take their brother or if he didn't accompany them to Egypt, they would not be allowed a measure of grain, evidenced by their plea, '*so let our brother go with us.'* This is their summary of the interactions they had with the Egyptian governor (who, unbeknown to them, is their other brother Joseph) and his stipulation that they wouldn't receive provisions unless they brought their brother from their father. They recount this to their father and request him to let their brother accompany

them so that they can procure provisions and not face deprivation.

Their use of the term '*our brother*' exhibits compassion and tenderness, aiming to reassure their father, similar to their assertion, *and we will indeed take care of him*,' emphasizing their utmost commitment.

قَالَ هَلْ آمَنُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا كَمَا أَمِنتُكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَخِيهِ مِن قَبْلُ فَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ حَافِظًا وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾

(12:64) He said, 'Should I trust you (*āmanu-kum*) with him just as I trusted you with his brother before? Yet Allah is the best of protectors, and He is the most merciful of merciful ones.'

In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī writes: '*Amn* means for the heart to be reassured regarding the safety of something important.' Therefore, the statement, '*Should I trust you with him* ...' means: 'Should I feel reassured entrusting this son of mine to you, just as I had felt reassured with his brother Joseph before? And we all know the outcome of that situation.'

In essence, this means: 'You expect me to trust him with you and to be reassured by you, just as I trusted and felt reassured by you regarding his brother before. You promise me, saying, "*and we will indeed take care of him*", just as you had promised with Joseph by saying, "*we will indeed take care of him*" (12:12). I accorded you a similar level of trust concerning Joseph, but you failed me and brought back his blood-stained shirt, claiming a wolf had eaten him. To trust you with this brother, in the same manner as I trusted you with his brother before, is to trust someone whose assurance offers no true security and whose ability to protect what's entrusted to him is uncertain.'

When Jacob says, *Yet Allah is the best of protectors, and He is the most merciful of merciful ones*,' this is an elaboration on his previous statement: '*Should I trust you with him*?' and so on. The implication is that if placing trust in you is without any benefit or real impact, then the best trust and reliance is that which is placed in God, for His protection. And if one is torn between relying on Him and delegating a matter to Him versus placing trust in someone else, then placing one's trust in God Almighty is the best and necessary course.

His words, *and He is the most merciful of merciful ones*,' serve as a rationale for the statement, '*Allah is the best of protectors*.' While others

might be entrusted with a task or responsibility and not show mercy to the one relying on them—failing in their duty—God, in His glory, is the most merciful of all, never withholding His mercy where it is needed. He has compassion for the weak and vulnerable who entrust matters to Him and rely on Him. Whoever relies on God, He is sufficient for them.

From this, it is clear that Jacob's intention was not merely to emphasize relying solely on God because He is the only true agent, entirely unfettered by other influences (though this is certainly true). As God says elsewhere, *And whoever puts his trust in Allah, He will suffice him. Indeed Allah carries through His command* (65:3). How could it be otherwise, when relying on anyone other than God in this sense would be akin to associating partners with Him, an act from which the prophets are far removed? God has explicitly stated that Jacob was one of his chosen servants and a leader of guidance for the rightly guided, and he himself acknowledges his earlier trust in his sons concerning Joseph. If this had truly been a form of association with others (*shirk*), he would never have done it.

Rather, Jacob intended to emphasize the necessity of placing trust in God over others because God alone possesses the most perfect attributes. These attributes assure that He will not betray those of His servants who rely upon Him and entrust their affairs to Him. Indeed, He is compassionate, merciful, forgiving, loving, generous, wise, and knowledgeable. Everyone agrees that He is the most merciful of the merciful, and He is irresistible and insurmountable in His decree. As for people, when they are trusted with something or someone entrusts them with a matter, they are easily swayed by whims and emotional impulses. Sometimes their sense of honor, loyalty, and mercy drives them to uphold what they are trusted with, and sometimes they betray this trust and fail. However, they neither possess the absolute power nor the autonomy in strength and will.

In essence, what he meant is that placing one's trust in God's protection is superior to relying on the protection of anyone else. This is because God, the Most High, is the most merciful of those who show mercy. He would never betray His servant, especially when the servant has entrusted something to Him with full confidence, unlike human beings. People sometimes do not uphold the trust placed in them, nor do they show mercy to those who rely on them, thereby betraying them. This is why, when he asked his sons to bring him a guarantee from God, he stated: '*I will not*

let him go with you until you give me a pledge by Allah that you will surely bring him back to me, unless you are made to perish.' Here he exempted circumstances beyond their control, such as unforeseen events, because they are beyond their capacity and they cannot be held accountable for them. What he requested as a guarantee was regarding matters within their control, like causing Benjamin harm or abandoning him. Understand this well.

From what has been mentioned, it becomes evident that when he said, '*and He is the most merciful of merciful ones*,' this is intended as a subtle reminder and an allusion to the fact that they did not fully grant mercy—or perhaps did not show any mercy at all—regarding the matter of Joseph when they had promised to protect him. The verse, in any case, serves as a reply to their request.

وَلَمَّا فَتَحُواْ مَتَاعَهُمْ وَجَدُواْ بِضَاعَتَهُمْ رُدَّتْ إِلَيْهِمْ قَالُواْ يَا أَبَانَا مَا نَبْغِي
هَذِهِ بِضَاعَتُنَا رُدَّتْ إِلَيْنَا وَنَمِيرُ أَهْلَنَا وَنَحْفَظُ أَخَانَا وَنَزْدَادُ كَيْلَ بَعِيرٍ
ذَلِكَ كَيْلٌ يَسِيرٌ ﴿٦٥﴾

(12:65) And when they opened their baggage, they found their capital restored to them. They said, 'Father, what do we want? (*mā nabghī?*) This is our capital, restored to us! We will get provisions (*namīr*) for our family and take care of our brother, and add another camel load of rations. That is an easy measure (*kayl yasīr*).'

The verb *baghī* means 'to seek' and is often used in the context of wrongdoing. Hence, it can sometimes be used to mean transgression or even adultery. In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī writes: 'The verb *mīra* (of which the verb *namīr* is a cognante) refers to foodstuffs or provisions that are transported from one place to another.'

When they say, *'Father, what do we want?'* this is a rhetorical question conveying their astonishment when they found their goods returned to them upon opening their belongings. This act was a testament to the governor of Egypt's generosity toward them, suggesting that he bore them no ill intent. He had returned the goods they had traded for food and provided them with their food as well. Their journey to Egypt, therefore, was both beneficial and profitable. Upon their return, they addressed their father,

saying, 'O our father, what more could we ask from our journey to Egypt beyond this? We have received full measure and have been reimbursed for the goods we traded away.' By saying, *'Father, what do we want?! This is our capital, restored to us!*' they aimed to further reassure their father and convince him to let their brother accompany them, highlighting the safety guaranteed by the governor and their commitment to protecting their brother, as they had promised. This is further emphasized by their subsequent statement, *We will get provisions for our family and take care of our brother, and add another camel load of rations. That is an easy measure*'—the last phrase implies that they think this a simple task.

Some might suggest that the particle *mā* in *mā nabghī* signifies negation, meaning: 'we do not seek to deceive you regarding what we have said regarding the governor of Egypt's generosity toward us—look! These are our goods returned to us!' Similarly, it has been said that the adjective *yasīr* here means 'a small amount,' meaning the quantity we have brought you on this occasion will not suffice. Therefore, we must seek an additional measure, equivalent to our brother's camel load.

قَالَ لَنْ أُرْسِلَهُ مَعَكُمْ حَتَّى تُؤْتُونِ مَوْثِقًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ لَتَأْتُنَّنِي بِهِ إِلاَّ أَن يُحَاطَ بِكُمْ فَلَمَّا آتَوْهُ مَوْثِقَهُمْ قَالَ اللَّهُ عَلَى مَا نَقُولُ وَكِيلٌ ﴿٦٦﴾

(12:66) He said, 'I will not let him go with you until you give me a pledge by Allah (*mawthiqan min Allāh*) that you will surely bring him back to me, unless you are made to perish (*illā an yuḥāṭ bi-kum*).' When they had given him their pledge, he said, 'Allah is a trustee (*wakīl*) over what we say.'

The term *mawthiq* ('pledge') means something upon which trust and reliance are placed. A *mawthiq* 'by Allah' means something that can be relied upon and is associated with divine authority. Giving someone such a guarantee means to make a promise that invokes God, such as a covenant or an oath, as a sort of collateral. One who makes an oath, saying, 'I promise to God to do such and such,' or 'By God, I will surely do such and such,' effectively stakes God's honor and sanctity upon his fulfillment of this promise, making it a pledge to the party to whom he swears. If he fails to fulfill his promise, he loses his pledge and is accountable to God without doubt.

The verb *iḥāṭa* (lit. 'to encompass,' from whence *yuḥāṭ* is conjugated) is derived from *ḥāṭ*, which means 'to guard.' This is why a protective wall that encircles a settlement is called a *ḥā'iṭ* (lit. 'a guarder,' which is the active participle of *ḥāṭ*). God is the *muḥīṭ* (lit. 'encompasser') of everything because He has authority over it, and preserves it from every angle, and no part of it is beyond his power. Equally, it can be said of someone that *aḥāṭa bi-hi al-balā' wa al-muṣība* ('tribulation and calamity beseiged him') when he is beset by misfortune and can find no escape from it. That is why it is sometimes said *uḥīṭa bi-hi* ('he was besieged') to convey that someone has perished, come to ruin, or can find no escape or refuge from a calamity. God says: *And ruin closed in on his produce* (uḥīṭa bi-thamari-hi)*, and he began to wring his hands for what he had spent on it* (18:42). And He says: *and they think that they are besieged* (anna-hum uḥīṭa bi-him(*, they invoke Allah putting exclusive faith in Him* (10:22). The present verse says, *unless you are made to perish* (illā an yuḥāṭ bi-kum), meaning: 'Unless some misfortune befalls you that renders you powerless and helpless and therefore unable to return Benjamin to me.'

Wakīl is derived from *wikāla*, which means to be entrusted with a matter on behalf of someone else and to act in their stead. When a person delegates another for a task, he grants them authority to act in his place. Trusting in them (*al-tawakkul ʿalayh*) implies confidence and assurance in their competence regarding the matter. Entrusting matters to God (*al-tawakkul ʿalā Allāh*) and relying on Him does not simply acknowledge Him as the Creator and Sovereign of all, but also recognizes that He has permitted the attribution of actions to their doers and events to their causes, despite these things lacking intrinsic power. Indeed, God, in His perfection, is the independent cause, who dominates over all others. Therefore, it is wise that when one seeks to achieve something and employs the usual means available to them, they recognize God as the sole independent director of affairs. This doesn't entail disassociating oneself or the means from the outcome. Rather, true reliance is not about denying the role of oneself or the means one uses to achieve the outcome, but about negating any claim of independent power from oneself and the means one uses, attributing all independent and original power to God, while maintaining the basic, dependent relationship that exists between oneself and the means employed.

That is why, when we look at these verses about Jacob's reliance on and trust in God, we see that he neither negated the means nor neglected them. Instead, he adhered to conventional methods. Firstly, he spoke to his sons about their brother, then took a pledge from them in the name of God, and thereafter placed his trust in God. This approach was also evident when he advised them in the subsequent verse to enter the city through separate gates, after which he once again proclaimed his trust in his Lord.

God, the Exalted One, oversees all matters that are dependent upon Him. He is the guardian of these matters, overseeing them in their entirety, even when they cannot function or exist by their own power and strength. He is the Lord of everything in that He is the possessor and the director of all.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is as follows: 'Jacob said to his sons, "*I will not let him go*"—referring to Benjamin, who was their brother from Joseph's mother—"*with you until you give me a pledge by Allah*", one which he can rely on and trust, whether in the form of an oath or a vow: "*You will surely bring him back to me* (la-ta'tunnanī bi-hi)" The prefixed *lām* in *la-ta'tunnani* signifies an oath. As their promise was under the trust of God, it extended to whatever was within their capacity and ability to do. However, an exception was made when he stated, "*unless you are made to perish*"—meaning rendered powerless. *When they had given him their pledge* in God's name, Jacob responded, "*Allah is a trustee over what we say*." This means that all of us, including myself and you, are making this statement, and we are resorting to these conventional means to achieve our desired objective. May God Almighty be the guardian of these words, ensuring they are upheld. If anyone commits to something, they should fulfill it as promised. And if someone breaches this trust, may God recompense and seek justice.

وَقَالَ يَا بَنِيَّ لاَ تَدْخُلُواْ مِن بَابٍ وَاحِدٍ وَادْخُلُواْ مِنْ أَبْوَابٍ مُّتَفَرِّقَةٍ وَمَا أُغْنِي عَنكُم مِّنَ اللّهِ مِن شَيْءٍ إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلاَّ لِلّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَعَلَيْهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

(12:67) And he said, 'My sons, do not enter by one gate, but enter by separate gates, though I cannot avail you anything against Allah. Sovereignty belongs only to Allah. In Him I have put my

trust; and in Him let all the trusting put their trust.'

This is a piece of advice given by Jacob to his sons when they presented him with the pledge in God's name and were preparing to depart for Egypt with Benjamin. It is inferred from the context of the story that he feared for his sons—all eleven of them. Not because he was worried the governor of Egypt might see them arriving together, for it was known that the governor would identify them and have them stand before him as a group of eleven brothers from the same father. Rather, Jacob's fear was that the public might gaze upon them and afflict them with the evil eye—as some commentators have said—or harbor envy toward tem, or become fearful of them, which might cause something to befall them with the aim of dispersing their unity, be it an act of violence or another calamity.

Following that, his statement, *I cannot avail you anything against Allah. Sovereignty belongs only to Allah*, suggests an implicit indication or feeling that he was deeply worried about a particular outcome. It seems as if Jacob had a premonition when they were preparing to travel and stood before him to bid farewell, a divine intuition that their union, in their splendid state, would soon be dispersed and reduced in number. Thus, he commanded them not to present themselves collectively in such a manner and cautioned them against entering through one gate. Instead, he resolved that they should enter through different gates, in the hope that this would divert any calamity that might separate them or diminish their number.

Then he returned to the explicit message of his statement, acknowledging that the preventive measure he relied on to avert the feared disaster is not truly independent or foundational. In actuality, only God Almighty has any real effect on existence. So, he qualified his statement by saying, addressing them, '*I cannot avail you anything against Allah*.' He then provided a rationale for this by saying: '*Sovereignty belongs only to Allah*.' In other words: 'I am not elevating your needs to God by commanding you to adopt a certain precautions to avoid any potential disaster or to seek safety and well-being, nor do I believe that such stratagems are sure to protect you. For these measures are ineffectual against the will of God, and they don't hold any sway over God Almighty. Judgment is God's sole and absolute prerogative. Such visible causes only take effect if God wills them to.'

This is why Jacob followed this statement by declaring, '*In Him I have put my trust; and in Him let all the trusting put their trust.*' This means

that even though he instructed them to take this precautionary measure to avert whatever disasters or misfortunes he feared might befall them, he, alongside this, placed his trust in God for this measure and for all other measures he adopted in his affairs. In this same vein, every wise and intelligent individual, who realizes that they are ultimately incapable of to controlling their own affairs and that conventional means, on their own, cannot achieve their goals, should resort in their matters to a guardian capable of handling their affairs and managing them best. That guardian is God, the Exalted, the Dominant One who cannot be dominated, the Overpowering One who cannot be overpowered. He does as He wills and decrees as He desires.

The verse thus clarifies firstly the essence of reliance (*tawakkul*), which means to entrust another with a matter related to the one relying on Him and the One on which they rely.

Secondly, that ordinary means, because they are not independent in their effect and are not self-sufficient without needing what lies beyond them, necessitate that anyone who appeals to them for vital objectives must rely, along with the appeal to these means, on a cause beyond them for these means to take effect. This approach ensures correctness and prudence, rather than neglecting the means upon which God has built the order of the universe and seeking an end without a means, as such negligence is misguided and ignorant.

Thirdly: The agent upon whom one must rely for matters is none other than God, the Exalted and Sublime, without any partner. For He is God, none is worthy of worship but Him, the Lord of everything. This exclusivity is indicated by Jacob's words, '*and in Him let all the trusting put their trust*.'

وَلَمَّا دَخَلُواْ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمَرَهُمْ أَبُوهُم مَّا كَانَ يُغْنِي عَنْهُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ مِن
شَيْءٍ إِلاَّ حَاجَةً فِي نَفْسِ يَعْقُوبَ قَضَاهَا وَإِنَّهُ لَذُو عِلْمٍ لِّمَا عَلَّمْنَاهُ
وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾

(12:68) When they entered whence their father had bidden them, it did not avail them anything against Allah, but only fulfilled a wish in Jacob's heart. Indeed he had the knowledge of what We had taught him, but most people do not know.

The context of the preceding and following verses, and pondering on these suggests that the phrase, *they entered whence their father had bidden them*, means they entered Egypt or the residence of the governor from separate gates, just as their father had instructed them to do when he bid them farewell. Jacob had advocated this strategy as a means to avert what he foresaw as a calamity that could scatter them or reduce their number, as alluded to in the previous verse. However, this tactic of entering as instructed by their father did not protect them from the adversity that God had predestined for them, for God's decree was already in motion for them. The governor took their brother on the account of the cup's theft, and the eldest brother stayed back in Egypt. This led to their separation and reduced their number. Neither Jacob's strategy nor their manner of entry could shield them from God's decree.

Yet, God, in His wisdom, turned this into a means to fulfill a need within Jacob, for this very cause, which deviated from Jacob's plans and led to the separation and reduced number of his sons, became the reason for Jacob to be reunited with Joseph. Joseph took his brother for himself, while the rest, excluding the eldest, returned to their father. They later came back to Joseph, beseeching him and humbling themselves before his authority. He then revealed his identity to them and later summoned his father and family to Egypt, thereby reuniting with them. The statement, *it did not avail them anything against Allah*, means neither Jacob's strategy nor the tactic he employed to save them from the impending calamity could guard them from God's definitive decree. Instead, one was taken from them, another remained in Egypt, and he was their eldest.

Regarding the verse, *but* (illā) *only fulfilled a wish in Jacob's heart*, it has been said that the particle of exception *illā* here means: 'but there was a desire in Jacob's soul that God was going to fulfill,' referring to his longing for his lost son, Joseph.

It's also plausible that *illā* here functions as an actual exception, such that when the verse says, *it did not avail them anything against Allah*, it means: 'This precautionary measure taken by Jacob did not benefit him at all, nor did it benefit any of them. God did not fulfill their collective needs through it, except for the desire in Jacob's soul.' The phrase *fulfilled* is an answer to an implied question: 'What did God do with that desire?' The answer is: "He fulfilled it."

The statement, *Indeed he had the knowledge of what We had taught him*, refers to Jacob. This means that Jacob was endowed with knowledge that God had granted him. The attribution of the act of teaching to God implies that this knowledge was divinely gifted, rather than acquired through experience or study. We have already discussed that the sincere and devoted practice of monotheism leads to such divine provision. Supporting this notion, the subsequent divine statement, *but most people do not know*, indicates that if this knowledge were of the commonly-acquired type, determined by apparent causes and reached by familiar conventional means, more people would know it and be guided by it.

Therefore, the statement, *Indeed he had the knowledge of what We had taught him, but most people do not know*, serves as God's praise for Jacob. Divinely gifted knowledge does not err in its guidance or judgment. The context shows that Jacob anticipated trials ahead, and that he took recourse to whatever means he had at his disposal to avert them, and his that the continued to harbor a longing for Joseph, which he never forgot and always mentioned. From these perspectives, it is evident that the statement, *indeed he had the knowledge of what We had taught him*, validates Jacob's instructions to his sons, and affirms his choice of means to fulfill his need, entrusting his affairs to God, who then fulfilled his personal longing for his long lost son.

This reading is based on our contemplation on the context of the verses. However, some exegetes have posited intriguing alternative explanations of the verse. Some say that when the verse says, *it did not avail them anything against Allah, but only fulfilled a wish in Jacob's heart*, this implies that their entrance into Egypt in the manner bidden by their father did not shield them from harm or prevent any misfortune befalling them, such as envy or the evil eye, that God had intended to reach them. According to this reading, Jacob knew that such precautions do not avert the divine decree. Yet, what he conveyed to his sons was a reflection of his innermost desire. By expressing it, Jacob eased his own heart, dispelling his anxieties and disturbances.

Others have said it means that if God had ordained for them (the brothers of Joseph) to be affected by the evil eye, it would have affected them whether they were dispersed or traveling together.

Others understand the phrase, *Indeed he had the knowledge of what*

We had taught him, to mean that Jacob possessed certainty and knowledge of God due to the fact he had received divine instruction, but that most people do not recognize his stature.

Some also argue that the *lām* in *Indeed he had the knowledge of what We had taught him* (wa inna-hu la-dhū ʿilmin limā ʿallamnā-hu) is for emphasis, and the meaning is that he acts according to what we taught him. Someone who knows something but does not act upon it is like one who does not know. And there are other explanations that scholars have provided beside the ones we have cited here.

وَلَمَّا دَخَلُواْ عَلَىٰ يُوسُفَ آوَىٰ إِلَيْهِ أَخَاهُ قَالَ إِنِّيٓ أَنَا۠ أَخُوكَ فَلَا تَبْتَئِسْ بِمَا كَانُواْ يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

(12:69) And when they entered into the presence of Joseph, he set his brother close to himself (*āwā ilay-hi akhā-hu*), and said, 'Indeed I am your brother, so do not sorrow (*lā tabta'is*) for what they used to do.'

The term *āwā ilay-hi* means to draw someone close and position them nearby in an assembly or the like thereof. The term *lā tabta'is* means 'do not be burdened or grieved,' while the '*they*' in '*what they used to do*' was a reference to the other brothers.

Therefore, the essence of the verse's meaning is: 'After the brothers entered Egypt and met Joseph, he drew Benjamin—who he had instructed them to bring to him and who was his full brother (from the same mother and father)—close to him and said, '*Indeed I am your brother*.' This means: 'I am Joseph, whom you lost years ago.' This statement is a second predicate, or the response to an implicit question. '*So do not sorrow* or be grieved *for what they*'—our brothers—'*used to do*'—meaning the various kinds of mistreatment and oppression they subjected us to because of their extreme jealousy toward us, or perhaps what the young men had done with an intention of leaving him (Benjamin) with Joseph.

From the context, it appears that Joseph discreetly revealed his identity to his brother, reassured him about the actions of their siblings, and tried to console him. Contrary to the claim of some that when he said, '*Indeed I am your brother*,' he meant that he was taking the place of a deceased brother—given that he had previously mentioned having a brother from

the same mother who had died, leaving him as the only sibling. Therefore, according to this reading, Joseph was not admitting his lineage but was simply trying to comfort him.

Such a claim contradicts the emphatic tone that is evident in Joseph's statement, '*Indeed I am your brother*,' which fits more with him revealing his true identity. This is also evident from his later declaration to his brothers: *I am Joseph, and this is my brother. Certainly Allah has shown us favor*. Such a statement makes sense only if his brother already knew of their relationship to one another, as should be obvious.

فَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُم بِجَهَازِهِمْ جَعَلَ السِّقَايَةَ فِي رَحْلِ أَخِيهِ ثُمَّ أَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌ أَيَّتُهَا الْعِيرُ إِنَّكُمْ لَسَارِقُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

(12:70) When he had furnished them with their provision, he put the drinking cup (*saqāya*) into his brother's saddle (*raḥl*). Then a herald shouted: 'O caravan (*ʿīr*)! You are indeed thieves!'

Saqāya refers to a vessel used for drinking; *raḥl* is a saddle placed on the back of a camel for riding' *ʿīr* denotes a group who are traveling with their goods, and it can be used to describe both the men and the camels carrying their goods, even though it can sometimes refer to one without the other. This definition is provided by al-Rāghib in his *Mufradāt*.

The meaning of the verse is obvious. This was a strategy devised by Joseph to ensure that his brother stayed with him, as the detailed narrative reveals. God presented this as a prelude to Joseph eventually revealing his true identity to his brothers, by which time Joseph and his brother were recipients of God's grace and honor.

Then a herald shouted: 'O caravan! You are indeed thieves!'—this is directed toward Joseph's brothers, including his maternal brother. It's possible to address a group about a matter that pertains to only one or a few members, when the specific culprits are not known. There are several examples of this in the Qur'an. In this situation, the 'theft'—namely, the discovery of the drinking cup in the saddlebag—was solely associated with one person, Joseph's maternal brother. However, since he had not yet been identified as the culprit among them, it was justifiable to address all of them with the proclamation, '*You are indeed thieves!*' The underlying message here is that the drinking cup was missing and found among

one of their number's belongings, which would only be confirmed upon further inspection.

From the context, it's clear that Joseph's maternal brother was aware of this scheme and was expecting it. This is why he remained silent from the beginning to the end. He neither defended himself against the accusation of theft nor showed any signs of distress. Joseph had taken the time to reassure him and let him know that everything was part of a plan he had devised. By labeling him as a thief and discovering the drinking cup in his saddlebag, Joseph had intended not to accuse him, but to ensure that he stayed with him. In the eyes of the brothers, it was an accusation, but from Joseph's perspective, this was not a genuine indictment, merely a formal designation that was necessary for his own designs.

Therefore, this attribution of theft—to view it from this perspective—was not a baseless accusation that was morally condemned or religiously forbidden, insofar as the one making this proclamation was the announcer who made the declaration, who presumably was unaware of the truth of the matter.

Some exegetes have said that the one who announced, '*You are indeed thieves!,*' was one of Joseph's people who had lost a measuring cup and did not know that Joseph had instructed that this be placed in his brother's saddle.

Others have suggested that Joseph had ordered the crier to make this proclamation, not referring to the theft of the container but rather alluding to the brothers having 'stolen' Joseph away from his father and having thrown him into the well. This interpretation is attributed to the commentator Abū Muslim.

Others still argue that the statement is interrogative, with the intended meaning being: 'Are you indeed thieves?,' omitting the interrogative particle. However, the unlikeliness of such a reading is evident from a number of angles.

قَالُوا۟ وَأَقْبَلُوا۟ عَلَيْهِم مَّاذَا تَفْقِدُونَ ﴿٧١﴾

(12:71) They said, as they turned toward them, 'What are you missing (*mā dhā tafqidūn*)?'

Here, *faqd*—as some have said—refers to the absence of something

from a person's perception, so much so that its location remains unknown. The pronoun in the phrase, *They said* ..., refers to the brothers, also described as the '*caravan*.' Their answer is '*What are you missing*?' The pronoun in *toward them* refers to Joseph and his servants, as indicated by the context.

The meaning is that Joseph's brothers approached Joseph and his attendants and asked: 'What are you missing?' This context indicates that the crier called out to them from behind as they had already started their journey.

قَالُواْ نَفۡقِدُ صُوَاعَ ٱلۡمَلِكِ وَلِمَن جَاءَ بِهِۦ حِمۡلُ بَعِيرٖ وَأَنَا۠ بِهِۦ زَعِيمٞ ٧٢

(12:72) They said, 'We miss the king's goblet (*suwāʿ*).' 'Whoever brings it shall have a camel load (*ḥamlu baʿīr*), I will guarantee that (*ana bi-hi zaʿīm*).'

The *suwāʿ* here is the drinking vessel or *saqāya* mentioned in 12:70. Some have said that it refers to the standard measure called a *sāʿ*, which is used to measure out quantities of goods. The king's goblet, then, was a container used both for drinking and measuring, which is why it was sometimes called a 'drinking vessel' (*saqāya*) and at other times a 'measuring bowl' (*suwāʿ*). Both masculine and feminine pronouns can be applied to it. Hence, it is said 'he who produces it' (*wa li man jā'a bi-hi*, masculine) and also *Then he took it out* (*thumma istakhraja-hā*, feminine, 12:76).

The term *ḥaml* ('load') refers to the burden that a bearer carries. Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī says that external loads, like items carried on one's back, are specifically named *ḥiml* (with an *i* after the *ḥ* as opposed to *ḥaml*), whereas internal loads, like a fetus in a womb, water in clouds, or fruit on a tree, are specifically termed *ḥaml* (with an *a* after the *ḥ*).

In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī writes: 'The term *zaʿīm* is synonymous with *kafīl* ('warrantor') and *ḍamīn* ('guarantor'), and *zaʿīm* can also refer to the person in charge of a group's affairs, which would be their leader (*raʾīs*).'

Perhaps the one who said, *'We miss the king's goblet'* is one of Joseph's servants, and the one who stated, '*Whoever brings it shall have a camel load, I will guarantee that*' is Joseph himself. This is because he is the leader responsible for granting or withholding, ensuring, guaranteeing,

and adjudicating. Reflecting on this, the dialogue is akin to saying: Joseph and his servants responded to them, with his servants saying, *'We miss the king's goblet,'* and Joseph stating, '*Whoever brings it shall have a camel load, I will guarantee that*.' This is the promise of a reward for whoever finds it.

It appears that some interpreters believe that the phrase '*Whoever brings it shall have a camel load, I will guarantee that*' is a continuation of the crier's statement, *'O caravan! You are indeed thieves!'* In this case, the statement, *They said, as they turned toward them, 'What are you missing?' They said, 'We miss the king's goblet,'* is parenthetical.

قَالُواْ تَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُم مَّا جِئْنَا لِنُفْسِدَ فِي الأَرْضِ وَمَا كُنَّا سَارِقِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾

(12:73) They said, 'By Allah! You certainly know that we did not come to make trouble in this country, and we are not thieves.'

The country in this verse refers to the country of Egypt, which they were visiting. The meaning of this verse is clear.

'You certainly know that we did not come to make trouble in this country' implies that they were thoroughly questioned upon their first entry into Egypt by Joseph's command, suspecting them of being spies or having malicious intentions. They would have questioned about their purpose, their place of origin, their lineage, and other similar matters. This supports the narratives that suggest that Joseph made it seem as if he was suspicious of them, inquiring about their affairs, their location, and their family. At this point, they mentioned their elderly father and a brother from the same father, and Joseph commanded that they bring them. This will be discussed further when we come to our treatment of the narrations.

Their statement, '*... and we are not thieves*!' denies that they ever bore such a vile trait or that their family has a history of such behavior.

قَالُواْ فَمَا جَزَاؤُهُ إِن كُنتُمْ كَاذِبِينَ ﴿٧٤﴾

(12:74) They said, 'What shall be its requital if you are lying?'

This means that Joseph's servants or he and his servants together, asked them about the punishment: 'What is the penalty for theft or for the one of your number who stole the cup if you are lying in your denial?'

The phrase, '*if you are lying*' relating dishonesty to them, is similar in

meaning to their previous statement, '*You are indeed thieves!*,' which has been discussed earlier.

قَالُواْ جَزَاؤُهُ مَن وُجِدَ فِي رَحْلِهِ فَهُوَ جَزَاؤُهُ كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾

(12:75) They said, 'The requital for it shall be that he in whose saddlebag it is found shall give himself over as its requital. Thus do we requite the wrongdoers.'

This indicates suggests that the penalty for theft is the thief himself; in essence, that whoever stole property becomes a servant to the person from whom he stole. This was the law during the time of Jacob, as indicated by their saying, '*Thus do we requite the wrongdoers*' meaning those wrongdoers, specifically thieves. But they refined their statement to '*The requital for it shall be that he in whose saddlebag it is found shall give himself over as its requital*' to emphasize that only the individual thief should be penalized, not his companions or any of the other eleven persons. After all, it is not fair to punish anyone other than the specific thief, even if the act of theft is confirmed. Furthermore, the stolen item's owner should have the right to take the thief himself and decide his fate.

فَبَدَأَ بِأَوْعِيَتِهِمْ قَبْلَ وِعَاء أَخِيهِ ثُمَّ اسْتَخْرَجَهَا مِن وِعَاء أَخِيهِ كَذَلِكَ كِدْنَا لِيُوسُفَ مَا كَانَ لِيَأْخُذَ أَخَاهُ فِي دِينِ الْمَلِكِ إِلاَّ أَن يَشَاء اللَّهُ نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ مِّن نَّشَاء وَفَوْقَ كُلِّ ذِي عِلْمٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٦﴾

(12:76) Then he began with their sacks, before his brother's sack. Then he took it out from his brother's sack. Thus did We devise for Joseph's sake. He could not have held his brother under the king's law unless Allah willed. We raise in rank whomever We please, and above every man of knowledge is One who knows best.

The clause '*Then ...*' at the beginning of this verse indicates that it followed logically and temporally from the exchange between Joseph and his brothers, above. The verse as a whole depicts Joseph undertaking a meticulous search of their belongings, in accordance with what was previously established concerning the thief's punishment. Joseph started with the other brothers' bags and only lastly turned to his brother Benjamin's bag,

in a move to disguise his true intent and prevent them from realizing or suspecting that he himself had planted the item in his brother's bag. Upon finding the item in his brother's bag, the consequence became settled due to its presence therein.

Thus did We devise for Joseph's sake. He could not have held his brother under the king's law unless Allah willed—This passage alludes to the strategy employed by Joseph to separate his maternal brother from the rest of their siblings. This act was indeed strategic, for it achieved Joseph's objective without his brothers becoming aware of his intentions. Had they known, they would not have consented to it, thus preventing him from achieving his goal. This strategy was inspired or revealed to him by God. Therefore, God attributed this scheme to Himself, stating, *Thus did We devise for Joseph's sake*.

Not all strategies or plans are removed from God's domain, but His divine purity is above the deceitful schemes that involve oppression, betrayal, deceit, and other ill-intentioned acts.

The phrase, *He could not have held his brother under the king's law unless Allah willed*, explains the necessity behind Joseph's strategy. Joseph desired to keep his brother with him, yet there was no provision in the established law of the Egyptian king that would allow him to do so—the law did not enslave a thief. Thus, Joseph, by God's guidance, created a situation where his brothers were accused of theft so that when they denied the charge, he could inquire about the punishment, knowing they would propose the thief's enslavement. By their own standards, Joseph then took his brother, adhering to the very rules they acknowledged.

Thus, Joseph could only have taken his brother under the king's law under circumstances that God willed. In this case, it was a situation that the brothers had accepted for themselves. From this incident, it is clear that the legal tradition of the time allowed the criminal to be subjected to the punishment they deemed suitable for themselves, often choosing the harshest one. Such practices were common in many traditional societies and royal policies.

The statement, *We raise in rank whomever We please, and above every man of knowledge is One who knows best*, is a testament to the grace bestowed upon Joseph by God in elevating him above his brothers. This serves as an elucidation of the previous statement, *Thus did We devise for*

Joseph's sake, and stands as a gesture of divine favor.

In the phrase, *and above every man of knowledge* (dhī ʿilm) *is one who knows better* (ʿalīm), it is clarified that knowledge is not a finite entity; there is always someone more knowledgeable than another.

It should be noted that the apparent meaning of *dhī ʿilm* here is someone with acquired knowledge, which is extrinsic to the knower. This is indicated by the word *dhī* (from *dhū*, lit. 'possessor of ...'), which suggests association or amalgamation. By contrast, God's infinite knowledge, which is intrinsic to His essence and utterly without limits, is beyond the scope of human beings to articulate.

However, the statement, "and above every person of knowledge is one more knowledgeable," only holds true in contexts where there's a conceivable "above" or hierarchy. As for God, He is beyond notions of above, below, behind, or any limit or end.

It's plausible that the statement, *and above every man of knowledge is one who knows better* indicates that God, in His transcendent wisdom, is above all possessors of knowledge. This is because '*above every man of knowledge*' can only apply to those who can have something 'above' them. However, there is no one 'above' God, nor 'below' Him. There is nothing 'beyond' His existence, nor is there any 'limit' or 'end' to His essence.

It is also possible that *and above every man of knowledge is one who knows better* (ʿalīm)—it is possible that *ʿalīm* here refers to God, meaning that He is the one who is above every possessor of knowledge. The fact that the adjective *ʿalīm* is left indefinite here might be to emphasize His magnificence and the fact that His knowledge is beyond definition by human tongues.

قَالُوٓاْ إِن يَسۡرِقۡ فَقَدۡ سَرَقَ أَخٞ لَّهُۥ مِن قَبۡلُۚ فَأَسَرَّهَا يُوسُفُ فِي نَفۡسِهِۦ وَلَمۡ يُبۡدِهَا لَهُمۡۚ قَالَ أَنتُمۡ شَرّٞ مَّكَانٗاۖ وَٱللَّهُ أَعۡلَمُ بِمَا تَصِفُونَ ٧٧

(12:77) They said, 'If he has stolen, a brother of his had stolen before.' Thereupon Joseph kept the matter to himself and he did not disclose it to them. He said, 'You are in a worse state! And Allah knows best what you allege.'

The speakers in this verse are Joseph's half-brothers from the same father. They attribute Joseph to their brother who was previously accused

of theft because both he and Joseph were from the same mother and father. The implication is that if this individual was to steal the king's measure, it wouldn't be surprising given that he had a brother who was previously proven to be a thief. They mean to claim that the two of them inherited this trait from their shared maternal lineage, setting themselves apart from Joseph and Benjamin.

In this, they are making a clear attempt to disassociate themselves from the crime. However, it contradicts their earlier statement, '*and we are not thieves*' (12:73), since in saying this they were collectively denying any act of theft by all of Jacob's sons. Their statement, '*a brother of his had stolen before*,' is at odds with their initial denial. Evidently, with these words, they reveal the envy harbored in their hearts toward Joseph and his brother (perhaps even unbeknownst to themselves). This reveals a myriad of unfortunate underlying issues among them.

From this, the meaning of Joseph's statement, '*You are in a worse state*,' becomes clear. It appears that the entirety of the phrase, *'You are in a worse state! And Allah knows best what you allege*,' is an explanation of the earlier passage, *Thereupon Joseph kept the matter to himself and he did not disclose it to them*, and the phrase *and he did not disclose it to them* for explains what is meant by his act of 'keeping the matter to himself.'

Therefore, the meaning, to the best of my understanding, of *thereupon Joseph kept the matter to himself* is that Joseph concealed the truth about their words, specifically their accusation that he had committed theft. He did not address their insinuations or defend himself, nor did he clarify the reality of the situation. Instead, Joseph kept this sentiment to himself and did not expose it to them. One might ask: How did he conceal it within himself? The answer is evident in his statement, *'You are in a worse state*,' as this hints at their contradictory statements, the evident envy within their hearts, and their audacity to lie in the presence of the governor of Egypt after all the benevolence he had shown them. Furthermore, when they said, '*a brother of his had stolen before*,' he did not deny or contradict them.

Some commentators have suggested that when Joseph said, *'You are in a worse state*,' he meant that they were in an even more reprehensible state than their accused brother since they had 'stolen' their own brother from their father, and God knows best whether their brother had previously stolen or not.

However, while it is possible that the meaning implied by Joseph's words, '*You are in a worse state*,' is as these commentators claim, given the context where his brothers were confronting him and Joseph did not want to reveal his identity, such an explanation would not align with what has been discussed earlier.

Others have suggested that what Joseph concealed and did not reveal to them was his statement, , '*You are in a worse state.*' Thus, he did not address them with these words, but later openly stated, '*Allah knows best what you allege*.' However, this interpretation seems rather far-fetched and does not match the context of the verse.

قَالُواْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ إِنَّ لَهُ أَبًا شَيْخًا كَبِيرًا فَخُذْ أَحَدَنَا مَكَانَهُ إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾

(12:78) They said, 'O emir! Indeed he has a father, a very old man; so take one of us in his place. Indeed we see that you are a virtuous man.'

The context of these verses indicates that they uttered these words upon realizing that their brother was deserving of detention and enslavement. They remembered the solemn promise they gave to their father in God's name to bring their brother back home safely, and they felt unable to return to face their father without him. Therefore, they resolved to offer one of themselves as ransom if the governor (who, recall, was actually Joseph) agreed. They beseeched him to take any of them he wished in place of their accused brother, allowing them to return him to their father.

The meaning of the verse is clear, and it is phrased in a way that suggests they were imploring and beseeching to governor in a way that would rouse his chivalry and kindness.

قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ أَن نَّأْخُذَ إِلاَّ مَن وَجَدْنَا مَتَاعَنَا عِندَهُ إِنَّا إِذًا لَّظَالِمُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾

(12:79) He said, 'God forbid that we should take anyone except him with whom we found our wares, for then we would indeed be wrongdoers.'

This verse is Joseph's response to his brothers' suggestion of taking one of them in the place of the accused brother, Benjamin. The meaning

of the verse is evident.

فَلَمَّا اسْتَيْأَسُواْ مِنْهُ خَلَصُواْ نَجِيًّا قَالَ كَبِيرُهُمْ أَلَمْ تَعْلَمُواْ أَنَّ أَبَاكُمْ قَدْ أَخَذَ عَلَيْكُم مَّوْثِقًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَمِن قَبْلُ مَا فَرَّطتُمْ فِي يُوسُفَ فَلَنْ أَبْرَحَ الأَرْضَ حَتَّىَ يَأْذَنَ لِي أَبِي أَوْ يَحْكُمَ اللَّهُ لِي وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحَاكِمِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾

(12:80) When they had despaired of him (*istay'asū min-hu*), they withdrew to confer privately (*khalaṣū najiyyan*). The eldest of them said, 'Don't you know that your father has taken a pledge from you by Allah, and earlier you have neglected your duty in regard to Joseph? So I will never leave this land until my father permits me, or Allah passes a judgment for me, and He is the best of judges.

In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī writes:

'*Ya's* (from whence the verb *istay'asū* is derived) means to lose all hope in something. The verb form used here (Form X or *bāb al-istifʿāl*) is similar to various other Arabic verb forms, such as *sakhara / istaskhara* ('to mock') *ʿajaba / istaʿjaba* ('to be amazed') that indicate intensity or reflexivity.

The verb *najī / yatanājawn* ('to confer privately') signifies when people converse secretly among themselves. This term can function both as a noun and a verbal noun. God has said elsewhere: *We drew him near for confidential discourse* (qarrabnā-hu najiyyan) (19:52), and this is possible in language because it is a verbal noun that can be used adjectivally. The basis for the term *munājā* ('private conversation') comes from *najwā*, which refers to an elevated piece of ground; in this context, it refers to elevating a secret between individuals in confidentiality. The word *najwā* can also function as a noun and an infinitive. For example, God says: *and when they hold secret talks* (wa idh hum najwā) (17:47), where it is used in the sense of the verb *yatanājawn* ('they hold secret talks'). On another occasion, it is used as a verbal noun: *Indeed secret talks are from Satan* (inna-mā al-najwā min al-shayṭān) (58:10). The plural of *najī* is *anjiya*.'

The pronoun 'him' in *When they had despaired of him* refers to Joseph, though it could also refer to his brother Benjamin. The meaning is that when Joseph's brothers had lost hope that he would let their accused brother go, even in exchange for one of them, they withdrew privately to

contemplate their situation. Should they return to their father without the brother they had promised by God to bring back safely? Or should they remain there, even if their stay has no benefit? What should they do?

Their eldest said, addressing the rest: '*Don't you know that your father has taken a pledge from you by Allah ...?*' The promise was to bring the brother back home safely from their journey, '*...and earlier you have neglected your duty in regard to Joseph*.' You had promised your father to protect him and bring him back safely, but instead, you threw him into a well, sold him to a caravan, and then told your father that a wolf had eaten him.

Then the eldest brother said: '*So I will never leave this land ...*,' meaning he would not leave Egypt, '*until my father permits me, or Allah passes a judgment for me, and He is the best of judges.*' That is, unless God provides me with a way out of this difficult situation in which every path seems closed. This could either be through a miraculous release of my brother from the governor's custody, through some means I cannot foresee, my own death, or another unexpected solution. I choose to remain here, while you should return to our father'—as described in the following two verses.

ارْجِعُواْ إِلَى أَبِيكُمْ فَقُولُواْ يَا أَبَانَا إِنَّ ابْنَكَ سَرَقَ وَمَا شَهِدْنَا إِلاَّ بِمَا عَلِمْنَا وَمَا كُنَّا لِلْغَيْبِ حَافِظِينَ ﴿٨١﴾

(12:81) Go back to your father, and say, "Father! Your son has indeed committed theft, and we testified only to what we knew, and we could not have forestalled the unseen."

Some commentators suggest that '*and we testified only to what we knew*' refers to their testimony, '*Your son has indeed committed theft,*' which is based solely on their awareness of the theft. Another reading is that they only testified to the ruler that a thief should be apprehended and be liable for his theft, based on their understanding of the law. According to this reading, they said this in response to a question from Jacob, namely: 'How would anyone know that when a thief is caught, he is held liable for his theft according to our law? They would only know this if you had told them!' The more fitting interpretation given the context is the former one.

Regarding the phrase, '*... and we could not have forestalled the unseen* (al-ghayb),' some have suggested that it means they didn't know the boy

would steal and be held accountable. They relied on apparent circumstances, and had they known he would steal, they would never have taken him with them or sworn an oath concerning him. The truth is that by '*the unseen*,' it means their brother being a thief, which they were unaware of. According to this view, the verse means: 'your son has stolen, and we testified about the punishment for theft only based on what we knew. We weren't aware that he had stolen the drinking vessel and would be apprehended for it, otherwise we wouldn't have testified in that manner. We never expected this from him.'

وَاسْأَلِ الْقَرْيَةَ الَّتِي كُنَّا فِيهَا وَالْعِيرَ الَّتِي أَقْبَلْنَا فِيهَا وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

(12:82) "Ask the town (*qarya*) we were in, and the caravan (*ʿīr*) with which we came. We indeed speak the truth."

Here, they are suggesting that Jacob inquire of anyone who accompanied them during this journey or witnessed their dealings with the ruler, to ensure he has no doubt that they were not negligent in their duties and that the boy indeed committed theft.

The 'town' they referred to here most likely refers to the city they were in in Egypt. The 'caravan' refers to the group they were traveling with. These people accompanied them on their way to Egypt and their return from it. Thus, they further emphasize their statement with, '*We indeed speak the truth*.' This emphasizes their sincerity about the boy's theft and their insistence on questioning to remove any doubt from Jacob's mind.

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Verses 83–92

These verses recount Jacob's dialogue with his sons after they returned from Egypt a second time, in which they informed him about their brother, Joseph (who they believed to be the governor of Egypt), and Jacob's instruction to them to return to Egypt for a third time, hoping they might find Joseph and his brother Benjamin. This continues until Joseph reveals his true identity to them.

قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنفُسُكُمْ أَمْرًا فَصَبْرٌ جَمِيلٌ عَسَى اللَّهُ أَن يَأْتِيَنِي بِهِمْ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٨٣﴾

(12:83) He said, 'Rather your souls have made a matter seem decorous to you. Yet patience is graceful. Maybe Allah will bring them all to me. Indeed He is the All-knowing, the All-wise.'

In this context, a lot of details are omitted, as indicated by the verses, '*Go back to your father, and say, "Father! Your son has indeed committed theft, and we testified only to what we knew, and we could not have forestalled the unseen. Ask the town we were in, and the caravan with which we came. We indeed speak the truth"*' (12:81–82). The implication is that when they returned to their father and relayed what their eldest brother had instructed them to say, their father responded, '*Rather your souls have made a matter seem decorous to you …*'

This phrase, '*Rather your souls have made a matter seem decorous to you …*' relates Jacob's response to his sons when they told him the news of what had happened. Jacob did not utter these words to deny their account or accuse them of lying—far be it from him to reject a narrative accompanied by clear signs of truth and with witnesses that could be verified. Nor did he intend to accuse his sons of ill intentions with his statement, '*Rather your souls have made a matter seem decorous to you …*' Instead, with divinely inspired insight, he perceived that this incident was linked to, and an offshoot of, a degree of self-deception on their part. This incident is rooted in the larger saga of Joseph, which was itself a result of their prior

self-deception.

From this, it becomes clear that Jacob was not merely attributing the absence of Joseph's brother to their actions. He also referenced the absence of the eldest brother who remained in Egypt and did not return to him. This is evidenced by his statement, '*Maybe Allah will bring them all to me*,' in which he inclusively refers to Joseph, his brother, and the eldest of the siblings, neither singling out Joseph's brother nor grouping together only Joseph and his brother. The apparent meaning from this context is that his hope in the return of all three sons is built on his graceful patience and forbearance in the face of their prior deeds.

So, the most likely meaning of the verse is that this incident is one of those situations which you have brought upon yourselves, just as I mentioned regarding the incident with Joseph. Therefore, I must practice graceful forbearance in the face of your actions, in the hope that God might reunite me with all three of my sons.

From here, it becomes evident that the claim of some commentators that the verse means, 'Indeed, what I believe is that the matter is not as you describe it, but rather your own souls have contrived a matter,' is incorrect.

'*Maybe Allah will bring them all to me. Indeed He is the All-knowing, the All-wise*'—This is an expression of hope for their collective return, implying, as he sees it, that Joseph is still alive and has not passed away. This statement is not merely a supplication; if it were just a prayer, he would not have ended it with '*Indeed He is the All-knowing, the All-wise.*' Instead, he would have concluded it with phrases like 'He is the All-Hearing, All-Knowing,' or '*He is the Compassionate, the Merciful*,' or another similar phrase, as is customary in the supplications found throughout the chapters of the Qur'an.

In fact, it is an expression of hope that results from Jacob's patience. He is saying that the previous incident with Joseph and this current event, in which two more of my sons are taken, are due to some impulse of yours. Hence, I will be patient and hope that God will bring back all my sons and bestow His favor upon the family of Jacob, as He promised me. Indeed, He is All-Knowing of the circumstances of selection and perfection of His favor, and Wise in His actions, orchestrating affairs according to profound wisdom. Thus, is not fitting for a person to be perturbed during trials and hardships by impulsiveness or despair, nor to lose hope in His mercy and

compassion.

The two divine names, 'All-knowing' (*'alīm*) and 'All-wise' (*ḥakīm*), are the same attributes that Jacob mentioned to Joseph the first time he narrated his dream, saying, '*Your Lord is indeed all-knowing, all-wise*' (12:6). Later, Joseph reminded Jacob of these attributes when he lifted his parents onto the throne and they prostrated before him, stating, *'Father! This is the fulfillment of my dream of long ago ... Indeed He is the All-knowing, the All-wise'* (12:100).

وَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَا أَسَفَى عَلَى يُوسُفَ وَابْيَضَّتْ عَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْحُزْنِ فَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ ﴿٨٤﴾

(12:84) And he turned away from them and said, 'Alas for Joseph (*yā asfā 'alā Yūsuf*)!' His eyes had turned white with grief, and he choked with suppressed agony (*wa huwa kaẓīm*).

Al-Rāghib has said: '*asaf* ("alas") means both sadness and anger. And it can also be used for each of these emotions individually. In essence, it denotes the blood of the heart boiling with the desire for revenge. When this feeling is directed at someone beneath you, it manifests as anger. When it is directed at someone above, it manifests as sadness. Furthermore, regarding the divine statement, *So when they roused Our wrath* (āsafnā)*, We took vengeance on them and drowned them all* (43:55)*.* meaning they angered Us, Abū 'Abd Allah al-Riḍā (sic) said, "God does not feel sorrow as we do, but He has allies who feel sorrow and pleasure. So, He equated their pleasure with His pleasure and their anger with His anger. He has said, 'Whoever dishonors an ally of Mine has indeed challenged Me to battle.'"'

Al-Rāghib has also stated: '*Kaẓm* (from whence *kaẓīm* is derived) is the release of breath. It is said, "*akhadha bi kaẓimi*" ("he held his breath"). While *kaẓūm* refers to suppressing one's breath and can denote silence. An example is when they say, "He hardly breathes" (*lā yatanaffas*) if described as exceedingly silent. When someone "restrains", it implies he holds back his breath. God has said, *who called out as he choked with grief* (wa huwa kaẓūm) (68:48) and, *the Godwary ... who ... suppress their anger* (al-kāẓimīn al-ghayẓ) (3:134). From this root also, one says *kaẓm* of a camel when it ceases to grunt and *kaẓm* of a water skin when it is tightly closed to prevent its contents from escaping.'

His eyes had turned white with grief—to say that a person's eyes turned white means that their pupils have turned white, denoting blindness and loss of sight. It can also mean to be partially sighted, but the verse, *Take this shirt of mine, and cast it upon my father's face; he will regain his sight* (12:93) shows that, in this case at least, it denotes a total loss of sight.

The meaning of the verse is that Jacob turned his back on his sons after addressing them by saying, '*Rather your souls have made a matter seem decorous to you...*' (in the previous verse). Then he exclaimed, 'Alas for Joseph!' Then his eyes turned white and he lost his sight out of his grief and sorrow for Joseph. However, he suppressed his anger and swallowed his sorrow, not confronting his sons about anything.

قَالُواْ تَاللَّه تَفْتَأُ تَذْكُرُ يُوسُفَ حَتَّى تَكُونَ حَرَضًا أَوْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْهَالِكِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾

(12:85) They said, 'By Allah! You will go on remembering Joseph until you wreck your health (*ḥattā takūna ḥaraḍan*) or perish (*aw takūna min al-hāikīn)*.'

The terms *ḥaraḍ* and *ḥāriḍ* refer to being on the brink of death. Some have said they means being in a state where one is neither dead and thus able to forget the source of his misery nor alive and thus able to hope for an improvement in one's fortunes. However, the first interpretation is more appropriate because *ḥaraḍ* is juxtasposed with *hālikīn* ('those who perish'). Note that while *hālikīn* is plural, *ḥaraḍ* is not: This is because *ḥaraḍ* is a verbal noun and, therefore, does not become plural or dual.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is, 'By God, you have persistently recalled Joseph and continuously mentioned him for years. You won't stop until you're on the brink of death or you perish!' The apparent sense of their words is that they said this out of sympathy for his condition and compassion toward him. However, it is possible they said this out of frustration with his constant crying and weariness from his prolonged mourning of Joseph. Particularly, because he denounced them regarding the matter of Joseph. His obvious crying and sorrow indicate he was accusing them, supported by his statement, '*I complain of my anguish and grief only to Allah ...*,' in the preceding verse.

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَشْكُو بَثِّي وَحُزْنِي إِلَى اللَّهِ وَأَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾

(12:86) He said, 'I complain of my anguish (*baththī*) and grief only to Allah. I know from Allah what you do not know.'

In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī writes: '*Baththa* refers to a deep distress that one cannot keep to oneself and thus vents or spreads it. Anything that is spread can be expressed with the verb *baththa*. For example, God says, a *and scatters therein* (baththa fī-hā) *every kind of animal*.' Therefore, the use of the verbal noun *baththa* here is in the sense of the passive participle of the verb or *mabthūth*, meaning 'that which is spread.' The construction of his saying, '*I complain... only...*,' conveys a meaning of exclusivity and implies a limitation of the heart. In other words: 'I do not complain about my suffering and grief to you, my sons and family. If I did, it would have ceased in the shortest time, as is the norm for people when they express their distress and sorrow during calamities. I only complain of my suffering and grief to God, the Exalted. For He is never weary or bored by the pleas of His servants. Those in need continuously beseech Him. I know things about God that you do not. Hence, I do not despair of His solace nor lose hope in His mercy.'

When Jacob says: '*I know from Allah what you do not know*,' this contains a general indication of the extent of his knowledge of God, which can only be understood in light of the context, as we have highlighted.

يَا بَنِيَّ اذْهَبُواْ فَتَحَسَّسُواْ مِن يُوسُفَ وَأَخِيهِ وَلاَ تَيْأَسُواْ مِن رَّوْحِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لاَ يَيْأَسُ مِن رَّوْحِ اللَّهِ إِلاَّ الْقَوْمُ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾

(12:87) 'Go, my sons, and look for (*taḥassasū min*) Joseph and his brother, and do not despair of Allah's mercy. Indeed no one despairs of Allah's mercy except the faithless lot.'

In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī writes: 'The verb *taḥassas* means to seek something out with one's senses, and it is similar in meaning to the verb *tajassus* ('to spy'). This is reflected in the tradition: 'Do not seek and do not spy!' (*lā taḥassasū wa lā tajassasū*). Others have said that the two are essentially synonymous with one another, and they only frequently appear side-by-side by virtue of the fact of their divergent spellings, as exemplified

by the verse of poetry: 'Whenever he draws close it retreats and withdraws' (*mattā adna min-hu yan'ā 'an-hu wa yab'ud*).

Others still have argued that *tajassus* means to search for people's faults, whereas with *taḥassus* means to eavesdrop on their conversations. When Ibn 'Abbās was asked about the difference between the two terms, he said: 'They are not far apart: searching (*taḥassus*) is for good and spying (*tajassus*) is for evil.'

... and do not despair of Allah's mercy **(rawḥ Allāh)**—the word *rawḥ* means breath or a pleasant breath. It is used figuratively to denote the state opposite to fatigue, which is relaxation or comfort. This is because severe hardships where hopes are cut off and paths to salvation are blocked can feel suffocating and oppressive to a person. Conversely, emerging into the vastness and openness of relief and attaining well-being feels like one can breathe again. Thus, the *rawḥ* attributed to God signifies relief after hardship by God's permission and will. Believers in God must believe that God does as He wills, and none can overturn His decree or judgment. One should never despair of the Spirit of God or lose hope in His mercy, as this would be tantamount to denying His omnipotence and disbelieving in His all-encompassing mercy. This sentiment is echoed in the present verse where Jacob says: '*Indeed no one despairs of Allah's mercy except the faithless lot*, and the verse in which Abraham states: *'Who despairs of his Lord's mercy except those who are astray?*' (15:56). Despairing of the mercy of God is considered one of the most grievous sins a person can commit, according to the traditions.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is that Jacob bids his sons, '*Go, my sons, and look for Joseph and his brother* who had been taken to Egypt in the hope of finding them. *and do not despair of Allah's* mercy'—meaning the relief that God provides after hardships—'*Indeed no one despairs of Allah's mercy except the faithless lot* —this refers to those who do not believe that God has the power to alleviate all sorrows and to provide relief from all hardships.

فَلَمَّا دَخَلُواْ عَلَيْهِ قَالُواْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ مَسَّنَا وَأَهْلَنَا الضُّرُّ وَجِئْنَا بِبِضَاعَةٍ
مُّزْجَاةٍ فَأَوْفِ لَنَا الْكَيْلَ وَتَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْزِى الْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ ﴿٨٨﴾

(12:88) Then, when they entered into his presence, they said,

> 'O mighty one! Distress has befallen our family, and us, and we have brought a meager capital (*biḍāʿa muzjāt*). Yet grant us the full measure, and be charitable to us! Indeed Allah rewards the charitable.'

The phrase *biḍāʿa muzjāt* ('a meager capital') refers to a small amount of goods to trade. The context of the verse suggests that the meaning is that Jacob's sons journeyed to Egypt and, upon meeting Joseph (of whose identity they were still unaware), conveyed the aforementioned words to him.

From the narrative flow, it becomes evident that they had two pressing matters to present before the 'mighty' official, who was really Joseph. However, given the evident circumstances, it seemed unlikely that their appeals would receive a favorable response.

Their first request they made was for the sale of food, despite them not having adequate funds to cover the cost of the provisions they needed. This was further complicated by their prior record, which included allegations of deceit and theft. Their reputation was diminished in the eyes of the government official, making it improbable that he would extend to them the same generosity they experienced during their previous visit.

The second matter was the release of their brother, who had been detained on charges of theft. They had already felt despondent about this, especially after their persistent appeals for his release were denied, and the official refused to even contemplate detaining another one of their number in his stead.

Therefore, when they appeared before Joseph, they spoke in a tone of utmost humility and submission. They amplified the gentleness of their words, appealing to his sense of compassion and empathy. They started by recounting the adversities that had befallen them and the dire circumstances they faced. Then, they mentioned the meager merchandise they had scraped together to trade for food and requested a fair measure in return. As for their detained brother, they did not directly ask for his release but instead appealed for charity. It is noteworthy that charity is often associated with money or provisions, while their brother, in essence, was considered the 'property' of the government official. They further incentivized this course of action by stating, 'Indeed, God rewards the charitable,' suggesting an implicit prayer or supplication.

To unpack the verse, *'O mighty one! Distress has befallen our family, and*

us'—this conveys the engulfing hardship and dire state they found themselves in. By saying, '*and we have brought a meager sum*,' they acknowledge their limited means, which are undoubtedly insufficient to procure the sustenance they need and seek. Their plea, *Yet grant us the full measure, and be charitable to us*' appears to encompass both their immediate need for provisions and their brother's release. By concluding with the phrase, '*Indeed Allah rewards the charitable*,' they effectively began their plea with a direct address, '*O mighty one!*' and concluded it with an implicit supplication. Their pleading of their difficult circumstances, acknowledging their insufficient trading capital, and their request for charity, all encapsulated an act of seeking mercy from someone whose past experiences with them might not make him inclined to grant it. Here they were, Joseph's brothers; a group standing humbly before the powerful official of Egypt (who, was it will be recalled, none other than Joseph himself).

At that moment, the divine decree was realized that God would elevate Joseph and his brother and humble the rest of Jacob's sons in front of him due to their wrongdoing. Thus, Joseph didn't delay in addressing them, asking, *'Have you realized what you did to Joseph and his brother, when you were senseless?'* (12:89). He then revealed his true identity to them. While Joseph could have informed his father and brothers of his whereabouts in Egypt during this prolonged period, God willed that he confront his brothers from a position of power, while they were humbled and vulnerable, especially while the other brother they envied was with Joseph, who occupied a place of honor and dignity.

قَالَ هَلْ عَلِمْتُم مَّا فَعَلْتُم بِيُوسُفَ وَأَخِيهِ إِذْ أَنتُمْ جَاهِلُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾

(12:89) He said, 'Have you realized what you did to Joseph and his brother, when you were senseless?'

It is rhetorical mode of speech to address wrongdoers with questions like 'Did you know?,' 'Do you realize?,' and so on—even though the person is well aware of what they did—to remind them of the repercussions of their actions. Yet, Joseph added to his question by saying, 'when you were ignorant,' offering them an implicit excuse for their behavior.

His statement, ''*Have you realized what you did to Joseph and his brother*...?' is merely a reminder of their actions without reprimanding

or holding them accountable for them, so that they will recognize God's extraordinary kindness to Joseph and his brother. This is a testament to Joseph's extraordinary magnanimity—truly a remarkable degree of nobility.

قَالُواْ أَإِنَّكَ لَأَنتَ يُوسُفُ قَالَ أَنَاْ يُوسُفُ وَهَذَا أَخِي قَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّهُ مَنَّ يَتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لاَ يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾

(12:90) They said, 'Are you really Joseph?!' He said, 'I am Joseph, and this is my brother. Certainly Allah has shown us favor. Indeed if one is Godwary and patient Allah does not waste the reward of the virtuous.'

God's words: 'They said, "Are you indeed Joseph?" He replied, "I am Joseph, and this is my brother. God has shown us favor..." confirms the earlier rhetorical question, indicating that irrefutable evidence established its veracity. The purpose of the inquiry was purely for acknowledgment.

The evidence before them pointed to the governor being none other than their brother who they had cast into the well and sold into slavery, Joseph. That is why they asked him, *'Are you really Joseph?'* (a inna-ka la-anta Yūsuf), accentuating their question with various elements of emphasis, such as *inna*, the *lām* on *la-anta*, and the use of a detached pronoun (*anta*, 'you'). He responded, *'I am Joseph, and this is my brother.'*Eeven though they had not asked about his brother and were hardly unaware of his identity, Joseph mentioned his brother to indicate God's favor upon them both. They were both envied, hence he stated, *'Certainly Allah has shown us favor.'*

Then, he attributed this divine favor to a number of apparent reasons, saying, '*Indeed if one is Godwary and patient Allah does not waste the reward of the virtuous.*' Through this, he called them to righteousness and illustrated that it is achieved through piety and patience.

قَالُواْ تَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ آثَرَكَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا وَإِن كُنَّا لَخَاطِئِينَ ﴿٩١﴾

(12:91) They said, 'By Allah, Allah has certainly preferred you over us (*la-qad āthara-ka Allāhu 'alay-nā*), and we have indeed been erring (*in kunnā la-khāti'īn*).'

The verb *īthār* (from whence *āthara* derives) means to choose and give priority to something.

Khaṭa' ('error') is the opposite of 'being right' (*ṣawāb*). The adjectives *khāti'* and *mukhti'* both denote someone who is in error. The verse is clear and contains the brother's admission of their own wrongdoing and their acknowledgment of God's preference for Joseph over them.

قَالَ لاَ تَثْرِيبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ يَغْفِرُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ ﴿٩٢﴾

(12:92) He said, 'There shall be no reproach (*tathrīb*) on you today. May Allah forgive you, and He is the most merciful of the merciful.'

Tathrīb ('reproach') means to blame and reprimand someone excessively and count out their sins. The specification of 'no reproach' to 'today' indicates the special status of forgiveness and his overlooking any desire to take revenge on them for their previous treatment of him in the present context. This context is that Joseph is the mighty governor of Egypt, endowed with prophecy, knowledge, and accompanied by his brother, while they stand humbled, admitting their error and recognizing that God has preferred him over them. This is utterly contrary to their initial sentiment: '*Surely Joseph and his brother are dearer to our father than us, though we are a hardy group. Our father is indeed in manifest error*' (12:8).

Then, Joseph prayed and sought forgiveness for his brothers, saying, '*May Allah forgive you, and He is the most merciful of the merciful.*' This is his prayer and plea for forgiveness for all of his brothers who wronged him collectively, even though those present that day were only some of them, not all, as can be inferred from the subsequent verse, *They said, 'By God, you persist in your inveterate error'* (12:95). This will be discussed further below.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, it is narrated from Abū Baṣīr that he heard Abū Ja'far relate: 'Jacob deeply mourned the loss of his son Joseph. His grief was so profound that his eyes turned white from sorrow. Jacob found himself in a dire situation, his circumstances changed drastically. He would get grain supplies from Egypt for his family twice a year: during winter and summer. He dispatched a few of his sons with a modest amount of goods to Egypt, and they were

accompanied by a caravan.

Upon their arrival in Egypt, and after Joseph had been appointed in a significant position by the ruler of Egypt, Joseph recognized his brothers. However, they failed to recognize him due to the majesty of his royal position and the authority he now wielded. He told them to present their goods ahead of the rest of the caravan. He instructed his servants, 'Quickly measure out their grain in full. Once you have finished, place their goods back in their bags, and do not let them know that you have done this.' His servants did as they were instructed. Later, Joseph inquired, 'I have heard you have other brothers from the same father; where are they?'

They said, 'The older one among them was eaten by a wolf, whereas the younger one, we left him with his father who is deeply grieved and compassionate toward him.' He said, 'I would prefer that you bring him to me when you return, so that I may see him—*But if you do not bring him to me, then there will be no rations for you with me, and do not come near me*' They said, *'We will solicit him from his father. We will surely do.'*

Upon returning to their father and opening their bags, they discovered their goods had been returned. They exclaimed to their father, 'What more could we ask for? Our goods have been returned to us. So, send our brother with us next time, and we assure you, we will watch over him.' Jacob responded, *Should I trust you with him just as I trusted you with his brother before?*'

After six months, when they needed more supplies, Jacob sent them again with modest goods. This time, he also sent Benjamin. He secured a promise from them in God's name: '*you will surely bring him back to me, unless you are made to perish*' (12:66). They left with the caravan, and upon arriving in Egypt, Joseph inquired if Benjamin was with them. They affirmed, and Joseph wanted to meet Benjamin privately in the palace. Once alone, he embraced Benjamin and wept, saying: 'I am your brother Joseph; do not be distressed by my actions or the position I hold. Keep this a secret, do not grieve, and do not fear.'

Later, Joseph instructed his servants to return their goods in their bags but to place the king's goblet in Benjamin's bag. As they set

off with the caravan, Joseph pursued them with his servants, who called out among them: *'O caravan! You are indeed thieves!'*
They said, as they turned toward them, 'What are you missing?'
They said, 'We miss the king's goblet.' 'Whoever brings it shall have a camel load, I will guarantee that.' They said, 'By Allah! You certainly know that we did not come to make trouble in this country, and we are not thieves.'
They said, 'What shall be its requital if you are lying?'
They said, 'The requital for it shall be that he in whose saddlebag it is found shall give himself over as its requital.
Then he began with their sacks, before his brother's sack. Then he took it out from his brother's sack ... They said, 'If he has stolen, a brother of his had stolen before.'
Joseph told them to leave his land. So, *they said, 'O emir! Indeed he has a father, a very old man* and he has taken a promise from God for us to return this brother of ours to him, *so take one of us in his place. Indeed we* would *see that you are a virtuous man* if you did that.'
Joseph responded, *God forbid that we should take anyone except him with whom we found our wares* '
Their eldest brother declared '*So I will never leave this land until my father permits me, or Allah passes a judgment for me*.'
Joseph's brothers continued their journey until they reached Jacob. He asked them, 'So where is Benjamin?' They replied, 'Benjamin has been accused of stealing the king's measuring cup. The king has taken him as a prisoner. So, ask the people of the town and the caravan, and they will inform you of this.' Jacob became extremely distressed, and his grief was so heavy upon him that his back became bent.

(2) In the same source, Abū Ḥamza al-Thumālī reports that Imām al-Bāqir said: 'I heard him mention: the king's goblet (*sawāʿ al-malik*) is the cup that he drinks from.'

Author's comment: In some narrations, it is mentioned that it was a golden cup that Joseph used as a measure.

(3) In another account in the same source, Abū Baṣīr reported from Imām al-Bāqir—and in one manuscript from Imām

al-Ṣādiq—saying: 'When I was with him, he was asked about Ṣālim bin Ḥafsa, who narrated that you spoke in seventy different ways, and one of them is an exit.' He replied, 'What does Sālim want from me? Does he expect me to bring angels? By God, even the prophets did not bring them. Indeed, Abraham said, "*Indeed, I am sick*," but by God, he was not sick, but he did not lie. And Abraham did say, "*Rather it was this biggest of them who did it!*" Yet, it was not the biggest idol who smashed the others, but Abraham did not lie. And Joseph did say, *"O caravan! You are indeed thieves!"*, but By God, they did not steal, and he did not lie.'

(4) In the same source, 'a man from our companions' reported from Imām al-Ṣādiq: 'I asked him about God's statement about Joseph: *"O caravan! You are indeed thieves!"* He said, "They stole Joseph from his father. Do you not see when they approached him and were asked, 'What are you missing?' They replied, 'We are missing the king's goblet.' They did not say, 'You have stolen the king's goblet.' What they meant was, 'You have stolen Joseph from his father.'"'

(5) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates from al-Ḥasan al-Ṣayqal: 'I asked Abū ʿAbd Allāh about what was narrated from Abū Jaʿfar regarding Joseph's statement, "*O caravan! You are indeed thieves!*" He said, "By God, they did not steal, and he did not lie. And Abraham had said, '*Rather it was this biggest of them who did it! Ask them, if they can speak*' but, by God, the biggest did not do it, and he did not lie."

Abū ʿAbd Allāh asked, "What is your perspective on this, al-Ṣayqal?"

I said, "We only accept it without question."

He said, "God loves two things and despises two others. He loves walking between two rows and he loves lying for the sake of reform. However, He despises roaming the streets and lying without the intention of reform. Abraham only said, "*it was the biggest of them who did it*," intending reform and to show that they do not do anything. Similarly, Joseph said it intending reform.'

Author's comment: His statement that he intended reform, does not contradict the earlier narration that he meant they stole Joseph from his

father. That the apparent meaning the speech (that they had stolen the goblet) does not match the reality is different from the speaker intending a true meaning in itself (that they had stolen Joseph), but which is not understood by others in the context of the conversation. The evidence for this is his statement, 'he intended reform and to show that they do not do anything,' where both meanings are combined. The phrase is consistent with one of them, the latter, and not the other. Understand this and refer back to what we have previously explained about the verses concerning Abraham as well.

Concerning the meanings of the last three traditions, there are other reports narrated in *al-Kāfī*, *al-Maʿānī*, and the comentaries of al-ʿAyyāshī and al-Qummī.

(6) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Ismāʿīl b. Humām, from Imām al-Riḍā, about the verse, '*If he has stolen, a brother of his had stolen before*.' *Thereupon Joseph kept the matter to himself and he did not disclose it to them* (12:77). He said: Isaac the prophet had a belt passed down among the prophets and the elders. It was with Joseph's maternal aunt. Joseph was with her, and she loved him. His father sent for him to be sent back. She pleaded to keep him for a night to have his scent, and she would return him in the morning. Upon dawn, she took the belt, tied it around him, dressed him in a shirt and sent him. She claimed the belt was stolen, and it was found on him. In that time, if someone stole, they were given to the owner of the stolen item. Thus, she kept him.'

(7) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn Mardawayh relates from Ibn ʿAbbās from the Prophet about the verse: '*If he has stolen, a brother of his had stolen before*.' He said: 'Joseph stole an idol made of gold and silver that belonged to his mother's father. He broke it and threw it on the path, and his brothers were blamed for this.'

Author's comment: The earlier narration is the more credible of the two. It has been narrated through different chains from the Imāms of the Prophet's Household. Supporting it are reports from more than one source from the Prophet's Household and other chains, which state that the jailer said to Joseph, 'I love you,' to which he replied, 'Do not love me. My aunt loved me and accused me of theft. My father loved me, and my brothers became envious, throwing me into a well. The wife of Potiphar loved me, and I was thrown into prison.'

(8) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates via his chain from Ibn Abī ʿUmayr

from his sources, from Imām al-Ṣādiq, concerning the verse, '*Indeed we see that you are a virtuous man*' (12:78). He said: Joseph used to have an open assembly, lend to those in need, and giving assistance the weak.

(9) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, it is narrated via a chain going back to al-Ḥusayn bin Saʿīd, in the book *al-Tamḥīṣ* from Jābir. He said: 'I asked Abū Jaʿfar: "What is graceful patience?" He replied: "It is patience without complaining to any of the people. Indeed, Abraham sent Jacob to a pious monk, for some purpose. When the monk saw him, he thought him to be Abraham, so he rushed to him, hugged him, and said, 'Welcome, O friend of the Merciful.' Jacob replied, 'I am not the friend of the Merciful, but Jacob, son of Isaac, son of Abraham.' The monk asked, 'What has aged you to this state?' Jacob replied: 'Worry, sorrow, and illness.'

It is said that Jacob hadn't passed the doorstep before God revealed to him: 'O Jacob, you have complained to My servants!' He fell prostrate at the door threshold, saying, 'Lord, I will not repeat this!' God then revealed to him that He had forgiven him, instructing him not to revert to such behavior. Henceforth, Jacob never lamented any of the calamities of the world, except for the day when he said: *'I complain of my anguish and grief only to Allah. I know from Allah what you do not know'* (12:86).

(10) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, ʿAbd al-Razzāq and Ibn Jarīr report from Muslim b, Yasār, via an incomplete chain to the Prophet the tradition: 'Whoever laments has not shown patience,' then he recited the verse, '*I complain of my anguish and grief only to Allah.*'

Author's comment: This tradition was also narrated by Ibn ʿAdī and al-Bayhaqī in *Shuʿub al-Īmān* from Ibn ʿUmar, who narrated it from the Prophet.

(11) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates via his chain from Ḥannān bin Sudayr, from Abū Jaʿfar: 'Tell me about Jacob's statement to his sons: "*Go, my sons, and look for Joseph and his brother.*" Did he know that Joseph was alive, even though they had been separated for twenty years? He replied, "Yes." I asked: "How did he know that?" He replied: "Jacob had prayed at dawn, requesting the Angel of Death to appear. In response, the angel Tarbāl came down and appeared to him, asking: "What is it you want O

Jacob?" He said: "Tell me about the spirits you take: Do you take them all at the same time or one by one?" He said: "I take them one spirit after another." He said: "Have you seen the spirit of Joseph?" He said: "No." It was then that Jacob realized Joseph was still alive, prompting him to tell his sons: "*Go, my sons, and look for Joseph and his brother.*"

Author's comment: This tradition was also narrated in *al-Maʿānī* by Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, via his chain from Ḥannān b. Sudayr, from his father, from the Imām. In this narration, Jacob asked the Angel of Death whether souls are taken en masse or separately. The angel replied that his aides collect souls separately, but they are presented to him collectively. Jacob, invoking the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, asked if Joseph's soul was among them. The angel said that it was not, confirming to Jacob that Joseph was alive.

(12) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Suyūṭī cites Isḥāq b. Rāhawayh's *Tafsīr*, Ibn Abī Dunyā's *Kitāb al-Faraj baʿd al-Shidda*, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Ṭabarānī, Abū Shaykh, al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī, Ibn Mardawayh, and al-Bayhaqī in *Shuʿub al-Īmān*, all of whom narrate from Anas, from the Prophet that the Angel Gabriel came to Jacob and said: 'O Jacob, God conveys His greetings and says: "Rejoice and let your heart be glad. By My might, if they had died, I would have shown them to you. So prepare a meal for the needy, for my most beloved servants are the prophets and the poor. Do you know why I took your sight, bent your back, and why Joseph's brothers did what they did to him? It was because you slaughtered a sheep and a fasting poor man came, but you did not feed him from it.'

Therefore, whenever Jacob wanted to have lunch, he would instruct a herald to announce: 'Whoever among the needy wants lunch, come and dine with Jacob!' And when he was fasting, he would instruct a herald to announce: 'Whoever among the needy is fasting, come and break your fast with Jacob!'

(13) In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, regarding the verse: *Yet Allah is the best of protectors* (12:64), it was narrated that God Almighty said: 'By My might, I will surely return them to you once you have relied on Me.'

Verses 93–102

This section of verses presents the conclusion to the story of Joseph. It contains the verses in which Joseph instructs his brothers to convey his shirt to their father and to return to him with their entire family. Subsequently, they enter Egypt and he reunites with his parents.

اذْهَبُواْ بِقَمِيصِى هَذَا فَأَلْقُوهُ عَلَى وَجْهِ أَبِى يَأْتِ بَصِيرًا وَأْتُونِى بِأَهْلِكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٩٣﴾

(12:93) Take this shirt of mine, and cast it upon my father's face; he will regain his sight, and bring me all your folks.

This is a continuation of Joseph's speech, in which he instructs his brothers to take his shirt to their father and place it on his face so that God may heal his eyes, restoring his sight after he had become blind due to his excessive grief and crying for the loss of Joseph. This act represents the last of the miraculous interventions God displayed in favor of Joseph in this chapter, where He turned events to his advantage, contrary to their initial appearances. Despite the malicious intentions of his brothers, who envied him, belittled him, and tried to remove him from his family by casting him into the well and selling him into slavery. However, God turned these very actions into blessings for Joseph. These actions, meant to harm him, became the reason he took up residence in the house of Potiphar in Egypt, enjoyed a place of honor, and later ascended to a position of power, where his brothers would beseech him saying, *'O mighty one! Distress has befallen our family, and us, and we have brought a meager sum. Yet grant us the full measure, and be charitable to us! Indeed Allah rewards the charitable'* (12:88)

Furthermore, when the wife of Potiphar and other women of Egypt desired Joseph and attempted to seduce him, God preserved him, and this very incident served to establish his innocence and highlight his virtuousness. Then, when they humiliated him by imprisoning him, but this too became a means for his eventual honor and authority in the land.

When his brothers first returned to their father with Joseph's

blood-stained shirt, falsely indicating his death, it became a source of their father's overwhelming grief. Such was the grief that it blinded him. But God, in His infinite wisdom and mercy, restored his sight. In essence, while circumstances seemed to conspire to bring Joseph down, God's will aimed to elevate him. And what God willed occurred, irrespective of what the apparent circumstances suggested.

When Joseph said, '*and bring me all your folks*,' this was a command for the entire house of Jacob—including Jacob himself, his family, his children, and his progeny—to migrate from their pastoral life to settle in Egypt.

وَلَمَّا فَصَلَتِ الْعِيرُ قَالَ أَبُوهُمْ إِنِّي لَأَجِدُ رِيحَ يُوسُفَ لَوْلَا أَن تُفَنِّدُونِ ﴿٩٤﴾

(12:94) As the caravan set off (*faṣalat al-ʿīr*), their father said, 'I sense the scent of Joseph, if you will not consider me a dotard (*tufannidūni*).'

The term *faṣl* means to separate or be separated from something.

The verb *tanfīd* (from whence derives *tufannidūn*) is derived from *fand*, meaning to be of poor judgment or lacking in wisdom.

The meaning here is that when the caravan carrying Joseph's shirt left Egypt and was distant from it, Jacob, speaking to those of his sons who were with him, sensed the familiar scent of Joseph, portending their forthcoming reunion. He might have been more convinced of this feeling had his sons not previously accused him of being delusional.

قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ إِنَّكَ لَفِي ضَلَالِكَ الْقَدِيمِ ﴿٩٥﴾

(12:95) They said, 'By God, you persist in your inveterate error (*ḍalālika al-qadīm*).'

This was Jacob's sons' response to him when he mentioned Joseph. The term *qadīm* here means the opposite of new, referring to something that has been present for a while. Some of his sons who were with him retorted with this, reflecting their persistent attitude throughout the story. At the beginning of the story, they had said, '*Our father is indeed in manifest error*' (12:8), and now, as it approaches its conclusion, they say again, *By God, you persist in your inveterate error*.

It seems that what they meant by 'error' (*ḍalāl*) on both occasions was what they saw as Jacob's excessive love for Joseph. They felt that they, being

many and strong, were more deserving of their father's love and attention, as they took care of the household and defended it. In their eyes, Jacob had deviated from the path of wisdom by favoring his two youngest children who offered no tangible support, while neglecting his more capable elder sons. After Joseph's apparent death, Jacob was deeply grieved, continuously mourning to the point that he lost his sight and became bent-backed—this only further frustrated his elder sons.

In referencing their father's prior *ḍalāl*, they did not mean to suggest this in the sense of religious deviation, which would be tantamount to disbelief. This is for the following reasons:

Firstly, the various parts of their statements throughout the story attest to the fact that they were monotheists, following the religion of their forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Secondly, the reference here, as well as at the beginning of the story when they said, '*Our father is indeed in manifest error*' does not contain anything to suggest a form of religious deviation. Rather, it refers to a practical and personal matter: the preferential love of a father for some children over others. This is what is meant by 'error' in this context, because they saw this love as misplaced.

فَلَمَّا أَن جَاءَ الْبَشِيرُ أَلْقَاهُ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ فَارْتَدَّ بَصِيرًا قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُل لَّكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾

(12:96) When the bearer of good news arrived, he cast it on his face, and he regained his sight. He said, 'Did I not tell you, "I know from Allah what you do not know?"'

The *bearer of good news* is the one who brought the shirt to Jacob. Here, Jacob reminds his sons of the statement he made earlier when they rebuked him for mentioning Joseph: *'I complain of my anguish and grief only to Allah. I know from Allah what you do not know.'* The meaning of this verse is clear.

قَالُواْ يَا أَبَانَا اسْتَغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا خَاطِئِينَ ﴿٩٧﴾

(12:97) They said, 'Father! Plead for forgiveness of our sins! We have indeed been erring.'

The ones speaking here are Jacob's sons, as is evident from their address: 'O our father!' By '*sins*' here, they are referring to their transgressions related to Joseph and his brother. As for Joseph, he had already prayed for their forgiveness before.

قَالَ سَوْفَ أَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ رَبِّيٓ إِنَّهُۥ هُوَ ٱلْغَفُورُ ٱلرَّحِيمُ ﴿٩٨﴾

(12:98) He said, 'I shall plead with my Lord to forgive you (*sawfa astaghfiru la-kum*); indeed He is the All-forgiving, the All-merciful.'

Jacob postponed seeking forgiveness for them, as indicated by his words, *sawfa astaghfiru la-kum*, in which he used the future particle *sawfa*. Perhaps the reason he delayed this was to fully relish the joy of reuniting with Joseph and allow his heart to completely heal from the pain of separation before seeking forgiveness on their behalf. Some traditions suggest that he postponed his supplication to a time when prayers are more likely to be answered—and we will discuss these later.

فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا۟ عَلَىٰ يُوسُفَ ءَاوَىٰٓ إِلَيْهِ أَبَوَيْهِ وَقَالَ ٱدْخُلُوا۟ مِصْرَ إِن شَآءَ ٱللَّهُ ءَامِنِينَ ﴿٩٩﴾

(12:99) When they entered into the presence of Joseph, he set his parents close to himself, and said, 'Welcome to Egypt, in safety, God willing!'

Once again, we notice that parts of the story have been left implicit for the sake of brevity: The narrative implies that Jacob and his family left their land and journeyed to Egypt. Upon their arrival, the events described in the verse occurred.

... *he set his parents close to himself* has been explained as meaning that he embraced them. When he said, '*Welcome to Egypt* ...,' this suggests that Joseph initially left Egypt to receive them and then invited them to enter Egypt as a gesture of respect and politeness. Joseph's statement, '... *in safety, God willing*' is profoundly eloquent, as he simultaneously demonstrates his authority by granting them safety and imposing his rule, as is the customs of kings. However, he predicates all of this on God's will, signifying that human intentions only manifest when aligned with divine

will, underscoring the essence of pure monotheism. The narrative suggests that their entrance and settlement in Egypt was only permissible with the permission of its ruler, which is why he assured them of safety at the outset.

The Qur'an uses the term '*his parents*,' but commentators differ on whether this refers to his actual mother and father, or if it means Jacob and Joseph's maternal aunt, based on the idea that his mother died when he was young. However, the Qur'anic discourse does not provide evidence supporting either reading, though the apparent meaning suggests that they were his biological parents.

Thus the meaning of the verse is: *When they*—Joseph's parents, brothers, and their households—*entered into the presence of Joseph*—outside of Egypt—*he set his parents close to himself*—and embraced them—*and said*—giving them a guarantee of safety—'*Welcome to Egypt, in safety, God willing!*'

وَرَفَعَ أَبَوَيْهِ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَخَرُّواْ لَهُ سُجَّدًا وَقَالَ يَا أَبَتِ هَذَا تَأْوِيلُ رُؤْيَايَ مِن قَبْلُ قَدْ جَعَلَهَا رَبِّي حَقًّا وَقَدْ أَحْسَنَ بِي إِذْ أَخْرَجَنِي مِنَ السِّجْنِ وَجَاءَ بِكُم مِّنَ الْبَدْوِ مِن بَعْدِ أَن نَّزَغَ الشَّيْطَانُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ إِخْوَتِي إِنَّ رَبِّي لَطِيفٌ لِّمَا يَشَاء إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١٠٠﴾

(12:100) And he raised his parents high upon the throne (*'arsh*), and they fell down prostrate before him (*kharrū la-hu sujjadan*). He said, 'Father! This is the fulfillment of my dream of long ago, which my Lord has made come true. He was certainly gracious to me when He brought me out of the prison and brought you over from the desert (*badw*) after that Satan had incited ill feeling between me and my brothers. Indeed, my Lord is all-attentive in bringing about what He wishes. Indeed, He is the All-knowing, the All-wise.'

An *'arsh* is an elevated seat, and the term is commonly used to denote the dais that is reserved for a king. The verb *kharūr* means to fall to the ground. *Badw* means to live the Bedouin life in the desert, as this was how Jacob lived before coming to Egypt.

And he raised his parents high upon the throne means that he seated them upon the royal throne where he sat, out of respect. The narrative

suggests they were raised onto the throne by Joseph's command, facilitated by his attendants, and not by him personally. The bowing down described by the phrase, *and they fell down prostrate before him*, likely occurred immediately upon seeing Joseph. It is as if they entered the room, were seated, and then when Joseph appeared, illuminated with divine light reflecting his exceptional beauty, such that they could not help but prostrate before him.

Regarding the phrase, *and they fell down prostrate before him*, the pronoun '*him*' refers to Joseph, as indicated by the context, signifying that he was the one prostrated to. While some argue that this prostration was intended for God, given the prohibition of prostrating to anyone other than Him, there is no linguistic evidence to support this view. A similar instance occurs in the Qur'an in the story of Adam and the angels, where God said, *When We said to the angels, 'Prostrate before Adam,' they prostrated, but not Iblis* (20:116).

The evidence that the prostration was not a form of worship directed to Joseph is that among those who prostrated to him was Jacob. The Qur'an explicitly states that Jacob was devoted solely to God, associating no partners with Him. Similarly, Joseph to whom the prostration was directed, is also affirmed in the Qur'an as someone who refrains from associating partners with God. This is evident when he said to his fellow inmates in prison, '*It is not for us to ascribe any partner to Allah*' (12:38), and nothing deterred them from this belief.

Thus, it is only logical to conclude that they took Joseph as a sign from God and used him as a direction for their prostration, intending to worship God through this act, similar to the way in which the Kaʿba is used as a direction for prayer in Islam, with the worship being directed toward God, not the Kaʿba itself. It is well-known that a sign, being merely symbolic, has no intrinsic divinity and thus the only deity worthy of worship remains God, the Exalted. This topic has been discussed at length in earlier parts of this book.

From this, it becomes evident that some of the justifications offered by other commentators are unfounded. For example, the claim that the customary greeting during that time was prostration, similar to how greeting in Islam is to offer peace, or the assertion that the act of prostration was a prevalent custom then and was not explicitly forbidden unless it was directed to someone other than God, similar to certain practices in

Islam, or even the idea that their prostration was akin to the act of bowing as practiced by some non-Arabs. None of these find any evidence in the text or elsewhere.

He said, 'Father! This is the fulfillment of my dream of long ago, which my Lord has made come true ...'—When Joseph witnessed his parents and eleven brothers prostrating to him, he recalled the dream he had seen earlier in his life where eleven stars, the sun, and the moon were prostrating to him, a dream he had shared with his father when he was a child. Referring to their prostration, he remarked, '*Father! This is the fulfillment of my dream of long ago, which my Lord has made come true*.'

He then expressed gratitude to his Lord, saying, '*He was certainly gracious to me when He brought me out of the prison ...*'—He recalled the favors that God had bestowed upon him in releasing him from a trying situation, the prison, and replacing it with ease and blessings, elevating him to a position of honor and leadership.

Note that Joseph does not mention being thrown into the well, given the presence of his brothers, as he did not wish to remind them of a past event that might upset them. Out of nobility and chivalry, he alluded to it in the most graceful manner without casting blame, saying, '*...and brought you over from the desert after that Satan had incited ill feeling between me and my brothers*' Here, the phrase, '*incited ill feeling*,' refers to the act of causing disruption or mischief. What he means to convey is that after the devil had caused division between him and his brothers, leading to certain events and their separation, God, in His mercy, brought Joseph to Egypt, blessed him with comfort, honor, and authority, and eventually reunited them all, moving them from the rural lands to a place of urbanized civilization.

In other words, Joseph is saying: 'All the various adversities befell me are due to the devil causing division between me and my brothers. Of these troubles, particularly difficult were the estrangement from you and the ordeal of imprisonment. Yet, God treated me favorably, deflecting these hardships from me one after another. These were not ordinary tribulations, but rather massive challenges and knots that seemed impossible to untie. Nevertheless, through His kindness and immense power, God intervened, turning what were once causes of destruction and misery into sources of life and blessing.' And that is why, following these last three points, after

his statement, '*He was certainly gracious to me …*,' he adds, '*Indeed my Lord is all-attentive in bringing about what He wishes.*'

When Joseph says, '*Indeed my Lord is all-attentive* (laṭīf) *in bringing about what He wishes*,' he is explaining the reason why he was released from prison and his family came to Egypt from the desert. This phrase highlights the special care and favor God bestowed upon him. The hardships that surrounded him would not have loosened or deviated from their course by any ordinary means, but God, being attentive in His will, transformed each of these harsh circumstances into a source of comfort and ease. What were once causes of humiliation and enslavement became means of honor and authority.

Al-Laṭīf ('the Gentle,' 'the Attentive,' or 'the Subtle') is one of God's exalted names. It indicates His omnipresence and encompassment of even the most far removed of circumstances. It alludes to His understanding of the innermost aspects of things. This emanates from His divine attribute of all-encompassing power and knowledge. The term '*laṭīf*' in its essence refers to subtlety, intricacy, and the ability to permeate the finest of spaces. It is also used metaphorically for kindness, sagacity, and the act of gentleness.

When Joseph says, '*Indeed He is the All-knowing, the All-wise,*' this provides a rationale for everything he recounted beginning from, *'Father! This is the fulfillment of my dream of long ago, which my Lord has made come true …*' He ends his speech with these two names to align with his father's description of God when discussing his dream, when Jacob said, '*Your Lord is indeed all-knowing, all-wise*.' It is also plausible that use of the definitive article *al-* in the All-knowing, the All-wise (*al-ʿalīm al-ḥakīm*) emphasizes affirmation (that is, 'He really is the All-knowing, the All-wise'), signifying his acknowledgment of his father's description on the day long ago when he first recounted his dream to him.

رَبِّ قَدْ آتَيْتَنِي مِنَ الْمُلْكِ وَعَلَّمْتَنِي مِن تَأْوِيلِ الأَحَادِيثِ فَاطِرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ أَنتَ وَلِيِّي فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ تَوَفَّنِي مُسْلِمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٠١﴾

(12:101) 'My Lord! You have granted me a share in the kingdom, and taught me the interpretation of dreams. Originator of the

> heavens and earth! You are my guardian in this world and the Hereafter! Let my death be in submission, and unite me with the Righteous.'

After Joseph praised his Lord and recounted the difficulties God averted from him, he wished to mention the distinct blessings God had bestowed upon him. Overwhelmed by divine love and detached from anything else, he shifted his address from his father, to focus solely on God. Turning to his Lord, he declared, '*My Lord! You have granted me a share in the kingdom, and taught me the interpretation of dreams.*'

'Originator of the heavens and earth! You are my guardian in this world and the Hereafter!'—Joseph begins a new statement, in which he redoubles his praise of God and returns to extolling the principle of divine guardianship (*wilāya*) after having mentioned some of its apparent manifestations, such as his release from prison, the arrival of his family from the desert, the kingdom granted to him, and the knowledge of interpreting dreams. For surely God the Exalted is the Lord in all matters great and small and is the sole guardian in this world and the next.

God's divine guardianship (*wilāya*)—by which I mean His sustaining of everything in its essence, attributes, and actions—stems from His creation and manifestation of all things, and from bringing them into manifest existence from the hiddenness of non-existence. Thus, He is the originator of the heavens and the earth. Therefore, the hearts of His chosen ones and sincere servants are directed toward Him through this name, which signifies His existence in Himself and His bringing other things into existence. As God has said, '*Is there any doubt about Allah, the originator of the heavens and the earth?*' (14:10).

In this way, Joseph, being one of those who are sincerely devoted to God, began his acknowledgment of this divine guardianship by saying, *Originator of the heavens and earth! You are my guardian in this world and the Hereafter!* In other words, he is saying, 'I am utterly under Your guardianship, without any agency or autonomy in myself, my attributes, my actions, or possessing any benefit, harm, life, death, or resurrection for myself.'

His statement, '*Let my death be in submission, and unite me with the Righteous,*' reveals that, having immersed himself in a state of humility before the Lord of Majesty and acknowledged His guardianship in both

this life and the next, he supplicated with the request of a subject to his master. He asked that he be as God's guardianship entails in both lives: to be submissive as long as he lives in this world and to be among the righteous in the Hereafter. For the perfection (*kamāl*) of a divine servant (*'abd*) lies in his surrender to his Lord, submitting what the Lord wants from him while he lives, not exhibiting what He dislikes, and not accepting that any of his own achievements belong to him. He should also be righteous, worthy of being in the proximity of his Lord and deserving of His lofty blessings in matters that do not revert to the servant's choice. This is his request for submission in this world and to be among the righteous in the Hereafter, which is what God, exalted be He, granted to his grandfather Abraham as stated, *We certainly chose him in the (present) world, and in the Hereafter he will indeed be among the Righteous. When his Lord said to him, 'Submit,' he said, 'I submit to the Lord of all the worlds'* (2:130–131).

The submission which he asked God to grant him represents the utmost level of submission and the highest rank of divine servanthood, for it is the act of total surrender to God. This means that a servant should not see in himself, nor in anything that he does, any form of independence, to the extent that nothing of his own being, his attributes, or his actions should distract him from his Lord. And if attributed to God, the servant's devotion is entirely for himself.

From the preceding, it becomes clear that his statement, '*Let my death be in submission* (tawaffanī musliman),' is a plea by Joseph for God to continuously preserve his sincerity and devotion and cause his state of submission to endure for as long as he lives. In other words, it means to live in a state of submission until God takes his life. This indicates a request for God to keep him steadfast in submission until his death. It does not imply that he should die in the state of submission even if he had not submitted to God before that moment. Nor is it merely a request to die while being a Muslim as if to say, 'I am a Muslim, so let me pass away now.'

This clarifies the mistaken notion presented by several early exegetes that when Joseph uttered the words, '*Let my death be in submission,*' this was a plea asking God for death. Some even said: 'No prophet had ever asked God for death or hoped for it except Joseph.'

ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ أَنبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا كُنتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ أَجْمَعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ

وَهُمْ يَمْكُرُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

(12:102) These are accounts of the Unseen which We reveal to you, and you were not with them when they conspired together (*ajmaʿū amra-hum*) and schemed.

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The demonstrative pronoun '*these*' refers to the story of Joseph. The address ('*you*') here is directed to the Prophet Muḥammad. The pronouns '*they*' and '*them*' refer to Joseph's brothers, with *ajmaʿū* being derived from *ijmāʿ* meaning their collective determination and intent to act.

The phrase, ... *and you were not with them* ..., serves as an adverbial qualifier for the pronoun '*you*' in '*reveal to you*.' The statement, ... *We reveal to you, and you were not with them when they conspired together and schemed*, elaborates on *These are accounts of the Unseen*. The implication here is that the story of Joseph is one of the hidden matters, for We reveal it to you, and the circumstances were such that you were not present when Joseph's brothers were determined on their scheme, plotting against Joseph.

Examining Narrations

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(1) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Abū Baṣīr from Abū Jaʿfar al-Bāqir, in a lengthy narration: 'Joseph told his brothers, "*There shall be no reproach on you today. May Allah forgive you ... Take this shirt of mine*—the one stained with the tears from my eyes— *and cast it upon my father's face; he will regain his sight, and bring me all your folks.*" He dispatched them back to Jacob that day and provided them with all they needed. As their caravan departed from Egypt, Jacob sensed Joseph's scent and said to those present, including his children, "*I sense the scent of Joseph, if you will not consider me a dotard.*"

His sons approached quickly, holding the shirt, joyful and elated by what they had seen of Joseph's status and the authority God had bestowed upon him. Their journey from Egypt to where Jacob resided took nine days. *When the bearer of good news arrived, he cast it on his face, and he regained his sight*. Jacob asked, "What happened to Benjamin?" They replied, "We left him in good condition with his brother." Jacob praised God for this blessing, prostrated in gratitude, his sight was restored, and his

back straightened. He then told his sons, "Go to Joseph with all of you today." They journeyed to Joseph, and with them were Jacob and Joseph's maternal aunt Yāmīl. Eagerly, they traveled for nine days to Egypt.'

Author's comment: The woman, Jacob's wife who traveled with him to Egypt, and who was Benjamin's mother, was Joseph's maternal aunt, not his actual mother. This fact is mentioned in several narrations and is apparent in the Qur'an. Some other narrations indicates that she was indeed Joseph's mother and that Joseph and Benjamin were full brothers by the same mother. However, these narrations are not strong enough to conclusively refute the former ones.

(2) In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī narrates from Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Ṣādiq, regarding the verse, *'I sense the scent of Joseph, if you will not consider me a dotard'* (12:94): 'Jacob sensed Joseph's scent when the caravan departed from Egypt, while he was in Palestine, a journey of ten nights away.'

Author's comment: It has been narrated in several traditions from both Sunnī and Shiʿi sources that the shirt Joseph sent to Jacob had, in fact, been sent down from Paradise. It was Abraham's shirt, given to him by Gabriel when he was thrown into the fire. When Abraham wore it, he felt cool and safe. Isaac inherited it, and later Jacob. Jacob made it into an amulet, hanging it on Joseph when he was born. It remained around his neck until Joseph removed it from the amulet, releasing the scent of Paradise which Jacob recognized. These narrations are of uncertain reliability, however, especially given their weak chains of transmission.

Similarly, there are other narratives from both sects which include a letter written by Jacob to Joseph. In this letter, written while Jacob believed Joseph to be the governor of Egypt on behalf of the Pharaoh's household, he sought the release of Benjamin. In the letter, he mentions that he is the son of Isaac, the one God commanded his grandfather, Abraham, to sacrifice, only later to ransom him with a great sacrifice. It should be noted that in an earlier part of the book, we discussed that the one to be sacrificed was actually Ishmael, not Isaac.

(3) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, Nashīt b. Nāṣiḥ al-Bajalī says: 'I asked Abū ʿAbd Allāh: 'Were the brothers of Joseph prophets?' He replied, 'No, nor were they virtuous devout men. And how could they

be when they said to their father, "*By God, you persist in your inveterate error*"?'

Author's comment: There are narratives in Sunnī sources and some weak Shi'i traditions which assert that they were indeed prophets. However, these reports are refuted by what has been conclusively established from the verses of the Qur'an, the traditions, and rational arguments concerning the infallibility of prophets. What appears in the Qur'an suggesting that the tribes were prophets, as in the verse, *and We revealed to Abraham and Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes* (4:163), contains no explicit indication that 'the Tribes' (al-Asbāṭ) referred to the brothers of Joseph. Rather, the term '*Asbāṭ*' can refer to all the tribes of the Children of Israel whose lineage traces back to Jacob. As in God's saying, "*We split them up into twelve tribal communities* (7:160).

(4) In *al-Faqīh*, Shaykh al-Ṣadūq narrates via his chain from Muḥammad b. Muslim, from Abū 'Abd Allāh about Jacob's words to his sons, '*I shall plead with my Lord to forgive you*,' He said: 'Jacob deferred this until the pre-dawn hours of Friday.'

Author's comment: There are other narratives in line with this. In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, for example, al-Suyūṭī relates from Ibn Jarīr and Abū al-Shaykh, from Ibn 'Abbās, from the Prophet: 'The words of my brother Jacob to his sons, '*I shall plead with my Lord to forgive you*,' mean that he delayed asking this until the eve of Friday.'

(5) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates via his chain from al-Faḍl b. Abī Qurra, from Abū 'Abd Allāh: 'The Messenger of God stated, "The best time you supplicate to God is during the pre-dawn hours." Then he recited the verse about Jacob saying, "*I shall plead with my Lord to forgive you*", and said: "He delayed this until the pre-dawn hours."

Author's comment: A similar narrative is reported in *Al-Durr al-manthūr* from Abū al-Shaykh and Ibn Mardawayh via Ibn 'Abbās. The Prophet was asked: 'Why did Jacob delay asking for forgiveness for his sons?' He said: 'He delayed it until the pre-dawn hours, because this is the time in which prayers are answered.'

We have already discussed the reasons this delay in our commentary on the verses. Moreover, when Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers, he approached them with chivalry and honor, without reproaching them

for the harm they caused him. It is fitting then that he forgave them and sought forgiveness for them promptly. However, Jacob's attitude toward them when his sight was restored by casting the shirt upon him was not of the same nature.

(6) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, it is narrated from Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā, from Yaḥya b. Aktham, that he asked Mūsā b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Mūsā about a number of things, and he then presented these questions to Abū al-Ḥasan. One of them was: 'Tell me about God's saying, *And he raised his parents high upon the throne, and they fell down prostrate before him* (12:100), did Jacob and his sons prostrate to Joseph even while they were prophets?

Abū al-Ḥasan al-Riḍā replied: 'As for the prostration of Jacob and his sons to Joseph, it was not for Joseph. Rather, it was an act of obedience to God and a greeting to Joseph, just as the angels' prostration to Adam was not for Adam, but an act of obedience to God and a greeting to Adam. So Jacob, his sons, and Joseph with them prostrated in gratitude to God for their reunion. Did you not see that he said in his gratitude at that time: *'My Lord! You have granted me a share in the kingdom, and taught me the interpretation of dreams. Originator of the heavens and earth! You are my guardian in this world and the Hereafter! Let my death be in submission, and unite me with the Righteous'* (12:101).

Author's comment: Some discussion has already taken place about their prostration to Joseph in the explanation of the verses, above, and the apparent meaning of the narration is that Joseph also prostrated with them as they did. This is inferred from Joseph's words of gratitude: *My Lord! You have granted me a share in the kingdom* ...' However, this inference is somewhat tentative.

(7) Al-ʿAyyāshī also narrates this tradition in his own *Tafsīr*, from Muḥammad b. Saʿīd al-Azadī, the companion of Mūsā b. Muḥammad b. al-Riḍā. He said to his brother: 'Yaḥya b. al-Aktham wrote to him asking about some questions. One was: "Inform me about God's saying, *And he raised his parents high upon the throne, and they fell down prostrate before him* ..., did Jacob and his sons prostrate to Joseph?"

He said, "I asked him about that, and he said: 'As for the prostration

of Jacob and his son to Joseph, it was in gratitude to God for their reunion. Do you not see that he says in his gratitude at that time: '*My Lord! You have granted me a share in the kingdom, and taught me the interpretation of dreams ...*'"

Author's comment: What al-'Ayyāshī narrated is closer in meaning to the wording of the verse and less ambiguous in nature than what is found in al-Qummī's commentary.

(8) In *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, it is narrated from Ibn Abī 'Umayr, from some of his companions, from Abū 'Abd Allāh, regarding God's saying, *And he raised his parents high upon the throne* ..., he said: 'The throne is the dais (*sarīr*).' And regarding His saying, *and they fell down prostrate before him*, he said: 'Their prostration was an act of worship to God.'

(9) In the same source, it is narrated from Abū Baṣīr, from Imām al-Bāqir that he said in a narration: 'They journeyed for nine days to Egypt. When they entered Joseph's presence in the king's house, he embraced his father, kissed him and wept. He lifted his aunt onto the king's dais, then he entered his house where he anointed himself, applied kohl, and wore the garments of honor and kingship. Then he returned to them...'—another version reads: '...he went out to them'—'And, when they saw him, they all prostrated in reverence and gratitude to God. At this, he said: "*Father! This is the fulfillment of my dream of long ago, which my Lord has made come true. He was certainly gracious to me when He brought me out of the prison and brought you over from the desert after that Satan had incited ill feeling between me and my brothers.*"'
He continued: 'During those twenty years, Joseph did not anoint himself, apply kohl, wear perfume, laugh, or touch women until God reunited him with Jacob and brought together him, Jacob and his brothers.'

(10) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates via his chain of narrators from al-'Abbās b. Hilāl al-Shāmī, the freedman of Abū al-Ḥasan, he said: 'I asked him: "May I be your ransom, what is more wondrous to people than eating coarse food, wearing rough clothes and being humble?" He replied, "Do you not know that Joseph, a prophet and the son of a prophet, used to wear silk caps embroidered with

gold? He would sit in the assemblies of Pharaoh's family and judge. People did not need his clothes, but they needed his justice. What is required of an Imām is that when he speaks, he speaks the truth, when he promises, he fulfills, and when he judges, he is fair—because God does not forbid any food or drink that is lawful—and forbids the unlawful, whether little or much. God has said: *Say, 'Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah which He has brought forth for His servants, and the good things of provision?'*"

(11) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narratred from Muḥammad b. Muslim: 'I asked Abū Jaʿfar: "How long did Jacob live with Joseph in Egypt, after God reunited the two of them and showed him the fulfillment of Joseph's dream?" He said: "He lived for two years." I asked: "Who was then the divine authority (*ḥujja*) on earth, Jacob or Joseph?" He said: "Jacob was the divine authority and Joseph was the king. When Jacob died, Joseph carried Jacob's bones in a coffin to the Levant and buried him in Jerusalem. Then Joseph, the son of Jacob, became the divine authority.'

Author's comment: The narrations about his story are numerous. We have limited ourselves to those that touch on the verses of the Qur'an, although most of them are not without confusions in their texts and weaknesses in their chains of narrators.

One report says that God Almighty placed prophethood from the family of Jacob in the loins of Levi, who was the one who prevented his brothers from killing Joseph when he said: *'Do not kill Joseph, but throw him into the recess of some well ...'* (12:10). He is also the one who said to his brothers when Joseph took Benjamin on the accusation of theft: *I will never leave this land until my father permits me, or Allah passes a judgment for me, and He is the best of judges*' (12:80), so God granted his children prophethood in gratitude for that.

Another report says that that Joseph married the wife of Potiphar, the woman who had tried to seduce him. This was after Potiphar had died during those barren years. It is not unlikely that this was a form of grace from God to her when she confirmed Joseph's truthfulness in her saying: '*Now the truth has come to light! It was I who solicited him, and he is indeed telling the truth*' (12:51), assuming the narration is authentic.

On the Story of Joseph

1. His story in the Qur'an:

He is Joseph, the prophet, son of Jacob, son of Isaac, son of Abraham the Friend of God. He was one of the twelve sons of Jacob and the youngest of his brothers, except for his brother Benjamin. God willed to complete His favor on him by endowing him with knowledge, wisdom, dignity, and kingship, and to elevate the status of the family of Jacob through him. So, He gave him glad tidings when he was young with a vision he saw where eleven stars, the sun, and the moon were prostrating to him. He mentioned this to his father, who advised him not to relate his vision to his brothers so they would not envy him. Then he interpreted his vision that God would choose him, teach him the interpretation of events, and complete His favor upon him and the family of Jacob, just as He completed it upon his parents before him, Abraham and Isaac.

This vision was always in Joseph's mind, taking hold of his heart, and his soul was constantly drawn to the love of his God and devotion to Him, due to his high spirit, purity of soul, and praiseworthy qualities. He had a unique beauty that was captivating and astonishing to onlookers.

Jacob loved him deeply because of the unique beauty he saw in him and the purity of his inner self he discerned. He never left him, not even for an hour. This weighed heavily on his older brothers, and their envy toward him grew so intense that they gathered and conspired against him. Some suggested killing him, while others said: '*Kill Joseph or cast him away into some land, so that your father's love may be exclusively yours, and that you may become a righteous lot after that*' (12:9). Then they agreed on what some of them suggested, which was to throw him into the bottom of the well so that some caravan would pick him up. They decided on this. They approached their father and persuaded him to let Joseph go with them the next day to graze and play, promising that they would look after him. Jacob did not agree and expressed his fear that a wolf might eat him. But they kept persuading him until they convinced him and took Joseph from him. They went with him to their sheep's pastures in the desert, where they threw him into a well after removing his shirt.

Then they came to their father with his shirt stained with false blood, weeping, and told him that they had gone racing that day and left Joseph with their belongings, and a wolf ate him, and this was his shirt stained

with his blood.

Jacob wept and said: *'Rather your souls have made a matter seem decorous to you. Yet patience is graceful, and Allah is the resort against what you allege'* (12:18).

He said this only because of divine intuition that God had cast into his heart. Jacob continued to remember Joseph and weep for him, and nothing could console him. His eyes turned white from grief, and he was filled with sorrow.

His sons kept watching the well until a caravan came. They sent their water drawer to draw water. He let down his bucket and Joseph clung to it. He was pulled out and they were glad to see him. The sons of Jacob approached them and claimed that he was their servant. Then they bargained with them until they sold him for a few silver coins.

The caravan took him to Egypt and put him up for sale. Potiphar of Egypt bought him and brought him into his house and said to his wife: *'Give him an honorable place. Maybe he will be useful to us, or we may adopt him as a son'* (12:21). This was because of the signs of nobility and purity of spirit Potiphar saw in his face, along with his extraordinary beauty. So, Joseph settled in the house of Potiphar in comfort and luxury. This was the first manifestation of God's subtle care for Joseph and His divine guardianship of him. Even though his brothers had thrown him into the well and sold him and tried to erase his memory and deprive him of a decent life in his father's house, God had replaced his tent and nomadic life with a royal palace and a sophisticated urban life. Thus, God elevated his status precisely when they wanted to degrade and belittle him. And so, God's will for him unfolded as events progressed.

Joseph lived in the house of Potiphar in the utmost comfort until he grew up and reached his prime. His soul continued to grow pure and his heart clean, and he devoted himself to his Lord until he was completely absorbed in His love and devoted to Him. He had no concern but God, so God chose him and devoted him to Himself, and gave him wisdom and knowledge. And this is what He does with those who do good.

However, it was during tis time that the wife of Potiphar fell in love with Joseph, and her love for him became so intense that she tried to seduce him. She locked the doors and invited him to her, saying: 'Come!' But Joseph refused and took refuge in God's protection, saying: *'God forbid!*

Indeed He is my Lord; He has given me a good abode. Indeed the wrongdoers are not felicitous' (12:23). *They raced to the door, and she tore his shirt from behind, and they ran into her husband at the door* (12:25). She accused Joseph of intending to harm her, and Joseph denied it. However, God's protection came to his rescue, and a baby in the cradle there testified to his innocence, and God showed him to be free of blame.

Then he was tested by the love of the women of Egypt and their attempts to seduce him, and the matter of the wife of Potiphar became public, leading to his imprisonment. The wife of Potiphar instigated this in an attempt to discipline him into responding to her desires, while Potiphar wanted to silence the circulating rumors that were tarnishing the honor of his household and marring his good reputation.

Joseph entered prison along with two young men who served the king. One of them mentioned that he saw in his dream that he was pressing wine, and the other saw that he was carrying bread on his head which the birds were eating. They asked him to interpret their dreams. He interpreted the first one's dream that he would be released and become the king's cupbearer, and the second one's dream that he would be crucified and the birds would eat from his head. It happened as he said. Joseph *said to the one whom he knew would be delivered from among the two: 'Mention me to your master.' But Satan caused him to forget mentioning it to his master. So he remained in the prison for several years* (12:42).

After a few years, the king saw a dream that terrified him. He mentioned it to his courtiers and said: *'I saw in a dream seven fat cows being devoured by seven lean ones, and seven green ears and others dry. O courtiers, give me your opinion about my dream, if you can interpret dreams.' They said, 'Confused nightmares, and we do not know the interpretation of nightmares'* (12:43–44). It was at that point that the king's cupbearer remembered Joseph and his interpretation of his dream. He mentioned this to the king and sought permission to return to prison and ask Joseph about the dream. The king granted him permission and sent him.

When he came to him and asked him about the dream, mentioning that people were waiting for him to reveal its meaning, he said: '*You will sow for seven consecutive years. Then leave in the ear whatever you harvest, except a little that you eat. Then after that there will come seven hard years which will eat up whatever you have set aside for them—all except a little*

which you preserve. Then after that there will come a year wherein the people will be granted relief and in which they will press.'

When the king heard Joseph's interpretation, he was impressed and ordered his release and his summoning. But when the messenger came to execute the king's order, Joseph refused to leave and appear before the king until the king investigated what had transpired between him and the women and passed judgment between him and them. When the women were brought forth and questioned about the matter, they all agreed to exonerate him of all the accusations and said: *'Heaven be praised! We know of no evil in him.'* The wife of Potiphar said: *'Now the truth has come to light! It was I who solicited him, and he is indeed telling the truth'* (12:51). The king greatly admired Joseph's knowledge, wisdom, integrity, and trustworthiness, and ordered his release and his summoning with honor, saying: *'Bring him to me, I will make him my favorite.' Then, when he had spoken with him, he said, 'Indeed today you will be honored and trustworthy with us.'* Thus, Joseph had passed the most rigorous tests and examinations.

Joseph said: '*Put me in charge of the country's granaries*'—referring to those of Egypt—*'I am indeed fastidious and well-informed.'* He wanted to prepare the kingdom during the seven fertile years that were to come, to rescue them from the threat of the seven barren years. The king agreed to this, and Joseph took charge. He ordered the cultivation of crops, the gathering of food, and its preservation in storehouses with careful planning and management. When the barren years hit, he distributed the stored provisions and rationed the food, thus saving them from famine. During these years, Joseph rose to a position of power in Egypt and took control of the throne. The prison had been a pathway for him to reach the seat of power and kingship, by God's will, even though they had intended to obliterate his memory and make people forget him.

During some of those barren years, his brothers came to Joseph to get food. He recognized them, but they did not recognize him. He asked them about their situation and themselves. They told him that they were the sons of Jacob and that they were eleven brothers, the youngest of whom was with their father, who was very attached to him and never let him leave his side. Joseph expressed his longing to see his youngest brother and asked them to bring him along if they returned for more food. He treated them generously and gave them their full measure of grain. They promised to

bring their younger brother, and he ordered his servants to place their merchandise back in their sacks so that they would recognize it when they returned to their family, in the hope that they would return.

When they returned to their father, they told him what had transpired between them and Potiphar of Egypt, and that he had withheld their ration unless they returned with their brother Benjamin. Their father refused, but when they opened their bags and found their merchandise returned to them, they pleaded with their father to send Benjamin with them to Egypt. He refused until they gave him a solemn promise in God's name that they would bring him back unless they were overtaken by an unforeseen event. They then prepared for their second journey to Egypt, this time with Benjamin. When they entered Joseph's presence, he brought his brother close to him, revealed his identity to him, and told him that he planned to keep him there with him, advising him not to be distressed by what he would witness of their scheme.

When he had furnished them with their provision, he put the drinking cup into his brother's saddle. Then a herald shouted: 'O caravan! You are indeed thieves!' They said, as they turned toward them, 'What are you missing?' They said, 'We miss the king's goblet.' 'Whoever brings it shall have a camel load, I will guarantee that.' They said, 'By Allah! You certainly know that we did not come to make trouble in this country, and we are not thieves.' They said, 'What shall be its requital if you are lying?' They said, 'The requital for it shall be that he in whose saddlebag it is found shall give himself over as its requital. That is how we requite thieves among ourselves.' *Then he began with their sacks, before his brother's sack. Then he took it out from his brother's sack* (12:70–76) then he ordered the arrest of his brother and incriminated him for the theft.

His brothers debated the decision with him, even offering one of them in his place out of compassion for their aged father, but to no avail. They returned to their father in despair, except for the eldest, who said, *'Don't you know that your father has taken a pledge from you by Allah, and earlier you have neglected your duty in regard to Joseph? So I will never leave this land until my father permits me, or Allah passes a judgment for me, and He is the best of judges*' (12:80). So he remained in Egypt while the others departed.

Upon returning to their father and relaying the events, he responded, *'Rather your souls have made a matter seem decorous to you. Yet patience is*

graceful. Maybe Allah will bring them all to me' (12:83). He turned away from them, lamenting, *'Alas for Joseph!' His eyes had turned white with grief, and he choked with suppressed agony*' (12:84). When they criticized his prolonged mourning for Joseph, he replied *'I complain of my anguish and grief only to Allah. I know from Allah what you do not know'* (12:86).

He then instructed them, *'Go, my sons, and look for Joseph and his brother, and do not despair of Allah's mercy,* for I hope that you will find them both!' (12:87)

A group of them set out for Egypt and sought an audience with Joseph, still believing him to be the governor of Egypt. Once they were in his presence, they pleaded, citing their family's hardship and the drought: *'O mighty one! Distress has befallen our family ...'* (12:88). They came with humble goods, asking him to complete their measure and release their brother whom he had claimed. They emphasized that God rewards the charitable.

At this point, Joseph's prophecy was fulfilled, elevating him and his brother above those who sought to harm them. Joseph wished to reveal his identity and asked, *'Have you realized what you did to Joseph and his brother, when you were senseless?'* They responded, 'Are you indeed Joseph?' *They said, 'Are you really Joseph?!' He said, 'I am Joseph, and this is my brother. Certainly Allah has shown us favor. Indeed if one is Godwary and patient Allah does not waste the reward of the virtuous.' They said, 'By Allah, Allah has certainly preferred you over us, and we have indeed been erring'* (12:89–91). They confessed their wrongdoing and realized that God elevates whom He wills and abases whom He wills, that the outcome belongs to the Godwary, and that God is ever with the steadfast. Then Joseph said: *'There shall be no reproach on you today. May Allah forgive you, and He is the most merciful of the merciful*' (12:92).

Afterward, he ordered them to return to their families and to take his shirt and cast it over their father's face, which would restore his sight. They prepared for their journey, and as the caravan departed, Jacob said to those sons of his who were with him: "*'I sense the scent of Joseph, if you will not consider me a dotard'* (12:94). They replied: *'By God, you persist in your inveterate error'* (12:95). *When the bearer of good news arrived, he cast the shirt over* Jacob's *face and he regained his sight.* Jacob said to his sons: *'Did I not tell you, "'I know from Allah what you do not know?"' They*

said, 'Father! Plead for forgiveness of our sins! We have indeed been erring.' He said, 'I shall plead with my Lord to forgive you; indeed He is the All-forgiving, the All-merciful' (12:96–97)

Then they prepared for the journey to Joseph, and he welcomed them and brought his parents close to him. He provided them with safety and settled them in the royal residence. He raised his parents high upon the throne, and they fell down before him in prostration. Joseph said: '*Father! This is the fulfillment of my dream of long ago, which my Lord has made come true.*' He then thanked God for His kindness in warding off great calamities and bestowing upon him authority and knowledge.

The family of Jacob remained in Egypt, and the people of Egypt loved Joseph greatly for the blessings he brought them and his good governance. He called them to the monotheistic religion and the way of his forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (as mentioned in the story of the prison and in Sūrah al-Ghāfir).

2. God's praise for him and his spiritual status:

Joseph was among those who sincerely devote themselves to God, the truthful, and the doers of good. God gave him wisdom and knowledge and taught him the interpretation of dreams. God chose him, completed His favor upon him, and joined him with the righteous (see Sūrah Yūsuf). He also praised him as He praised the family of Noah and Abraham among the prophets and mentioned him among them (see Sūrah al-Anʿām).

3. His story in the present Torah:

The Torah[1] says: Jacob had twelve sons: the sons of Leah were Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. The sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin. The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant, were Dan and Naphtali. The sons of Zilpah, Leah's maidservant, were Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan Aram. The Torah also mentions that Leah and Rachel, the wives of Jacob, were the daughters of Laban the Aramean, and that Rachel, the mother of Joseph, died while giving birth to Benjamin.

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1 The story of Joseph can be found in Genesis 37-50. ʿAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī has presented a slightly summarized version of this here. (Trans.)

Joseph, when he was seventeen years old, was tending the flock with his brothers as a helper to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. Joseph brought their father a bad report about them. Now Israel (Jacob) loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, 'Listen to this dream I had: We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it.' His brothers said to him, 'Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?' And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. 'Listen,' he said, 'I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.' When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, 'What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?' His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

His brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem, and Israel said to Joseph, 'As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them.' 'Very well,' he replied. So he said to him, 'Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me.' Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron. When Joseph arrived at Shechem, a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, 'What are you looking for?' He replied, 'I am looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?' 'They have moved on from here,' the man answered. 'I heard them say, 'Let's go to Dothan.''So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan.

But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. 'Here comes that dreamer!' they said to each other. 'Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of

his dreams.' When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. 'Let's not take his life,' he said. 'Don't shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the wilderness, but do not lay a hand on him.' Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father. So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the ornate robe he was wearing— and they took him and threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

'Here comes that dreamer!' they said to each other. 'Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams.' When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. 'Let's not take his life,' he said. 'Don't shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the wilderness, but do not lay a hand on him.' Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father. So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the ornate robe he was wearing— and they took him and threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

Then they sat down to eat their meal. They looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt. Judah said to his brothers, 'What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.' His brothers agreed.

So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt. When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes. He went back to his brothers and said, 'The boy is not there! Where can I turn now?'

Then they got Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. They took the ornate robe back to their father and said, 'We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son's robe.' He recognized it and said, 'It is my son's robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces.' Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. 'No,' he said,

'I will continue to mourn until I join my son in the grave.' So his father wept for him.'

The Torah says: 'Meanwhile, the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard. The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his personal servant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph's care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate. Now Joseph was well-built and handsome.

After these things, his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph, and she said, 'Lie with me.' But he refused and said to his master's wife, 'Behold, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. There is none greater in this house than I; nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie by her or to be with her.

One day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house, she caught him by his garment, saying, 'Lie with me.' But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house. And when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled out of the house, she called to the men of her household and said to them, 'See, he has brought in a Hebrew to us to laugh at us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. And as soon as he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me and fled and got out of the house.'

Then she laid up his garment by her until his master came home, and she told him the same story, saying, 'The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to laugh at me. But as soon as I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment beside me and fled out of the house.'

As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, 'This is the way your servant treated me,' his anger was kindled. And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison. But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed.

Then the Torah recounted the story of the two prison mates and their dreams and Pharaoh's dream. The summary is that they were Pharaoh's chief cupbearer and chief baker, who had offended their lord the king of Egypt, and Pharaoh was angry with his two officers and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. The chief cupbearer saw in his dream that he was pressing grapes into Pharaoh's cup, and the other saw that birds were eating from the baked goods on his head. They asked Joseph for interpretations, and he interpreted the first dream as the cupbearer's return to his former position and the second as the baker's execution and the birds eating his flesh. The cupbearer promised to mention Joseph to Pharaoh, hoping that he might be released from prison, but Satan caused him to forget.

After two years, Pharaoh had a dream in which he saw seven plump and attractive cows emerge from the river. Following them were seven gaunt and unappealing cows, which stood on the riverbank. The gaunt cows then consumed the plump ones. Pharaoh woke up and soon fell asleep again. In this next dream, he saw seven lush, healthy ears of grain, and behind them were seven thin, wind-blasted ears. The thin ears swallowed the healthy ones. This vision greatly disturbed Pharaoh, prompting him to gather Egypt's magicians and wise men. He recounted his dreams to them, but they were unable to interpret them.

At that moment, the chief cupbearer remembered Joseph and spoke of his extraordinary ability to interpret dreams. Pharaoh, intrigued, ordered for Joseph to be brought before him. Upon arrival, Joseph was informed of Pharaoh's dreams and asked for his interpretation. Joseph said to Pharaoh: 'Both of Pharaoh's dreams are one. God has informed Pharaoh of His

plans: the seven attractive cows and the seven healthy ears of grain represent seven years, whereas the seven unappealing cows and the seven empty ears, blasted by the east wind, symbolize another seven years—this time of famine.

God has revealed to Pharaoh what He is about to do. There will be seven years of great abundance throughout the land of Egypt. However, these will be followed by seven years of famine so severe that the period of abundance will be entirely forgotten. The land will be devastated by this famine, and the abundance will not be remembered because of the severity of the impending hunger. The reason Pharaoh had the same dream twice is that this matter has been firmly decreed by God, and He will act swiftly upon it.

Now, Pharaoh should seek a discerning and wise individual and place him in charge of the land of Egypt. This person should oversee the land, taking a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven plentiful years. They should gather all the food from these upcoming good years, storing grain under Pharaoh's authority in the cities, ensuring it is kept safe. This stored grain will serve as a reserve during the seven years of famine that will follow in the land of Egypt, ensuring the land is not entirely consumed by hunger.'

The Torah recounts that Pharaoh was impressed by Joseph's interpretation and honored him. He granted Joseph authority over the entire kingdom in all its affairs. Pharaoh gave Joseph his signet ring, dressed him in fine linen garments, placed a gold chain around his neck, and had him ride in his private chariot. As Joseph passed by, the proclamation was made, 'Bow down!' Joseph effectively managed affairs during the years of abundance and subsequently during the years of drought.

Furthermore, the Torah describes that when famine struck the land of Canaan, Jacob instructed his sons to descend to Egypt to purchase food. They went and came before Joseph. Although Joseph recognized them, he feigned ignorance and spoke to them with a stern demeanor. When asked where they came from, they replied, 'From the land of Canaan to buy food.' Joseph accused them, 'You are spies! You have come to see where our land is vulnerable.' They responded, 'We are all sons of one man in Canaan. We were twelve brothers; one is no more, and the youngest is with our father. We are honest men, not spies.'

Joseph insisted, 'By the life of Pharaoh, you are spies! You will not leave

unless you bring your younger brother to me, to validate your claims.' Consequently, they were detained for three days. Later, Joseph brought them out, took Simeon as a hostage, and instructed the others to return to Canaan and bring back their youngest brother.

Joseph also ordered that their sacks be filled with grain and that the money of each man be returned to his sack. When they returned to their father Jacob and relayed their experience, Jacob refused to send Benjamin with them, lamenting, 'You have deprived me of my children! Joseph is gone, Simeon is gone, and now you want to take Benjamin? Never will this happen!' The brothers replied that they had not intentionally informed the Egyptian official about Benjamin, but he had inquired about their family, asking if their father was still alive and if they had another brother. They had answered truthfully, unaware that he would request to see their youngest sibling. Jacob remained reluctant until Judah personally vouched for Benjamin's safe return. Finally, Jacob consented, instructing them to take the best products of the land as gifts for the Egyptian official and also to bring back the silver that was returned in their sacks. They did as instructed.

Upon their return to Egypt, they encountered Joseph's steward who managed his affairs. They informed him about their situation and that their merchandise had been returned to them. They also presented their gifts to him. The steward welcomed them warmly, honored them, informed them that their money had been accounted for, and released Simeon to them. They were then ushered into Joseph's presence, where they prostrated before him and presented their gifts. Joseph, in turn, greeted them warmly, inquired about their well-being, and sought news about their father's health. They then introduced their youngest brother to him. Joseph honored the youth and prayed for him. Subsequently, he ordered for food to be served; a meal for himself separately, one for his brothers, and another for the Egyptians in his company.

He then instructed his steward to fill their sacks with grain and to secretly place their gifts back into their sacks. Moreover, he ordered his special goblet to be placed in the sack of the youngest brother. This was done, and at dawn, they loaded their donkeys and departed.

However, once they had left the city and had not gone far, Joseph instructed his steward to pursue them. Upon catching up, he accused them of repaying kindness with betrayal, for they had allegedly stolen Joseph's

precious goblet used for drinking and divination. They were shocked and denied the accusation, saying that the money they had found in their sacks was what they had brought from Canaan. They challenged, 'How would we steal gold or silver from your lord's house? If the goblet is found with any of us, let him be executed, and we will become your lord's slaves.'

The steward agreed to the proposed punishment but with a modification: only the one with whom the goblet was found would be taken as a slave. They hastily lowered their sacks, and each opened his. The steward began his search with the eldest and ended with the youngest, ultimately discovering the goblet in the youngest brother's sack.

On witnessing this, the brothers tore their clothes in distress. They returned to the city and presented themselves before Joseph. They reiterated their earlier statements, their faces bearing the marks of humiliation, regret, and shame. Joseph responded, 'Only he in whose sack the goblet was found will be my slave; the rest of you may return in peace to your father.'

Judah stepped forward and passionately pleaded with Joseph. He recounted their previous interactions, their father's deep sorrow over the loss of Joseph, and the severe reluctance he had shown in letting Benjamin travel to Egypt. Judah had given his father a solemn pledge to ensure Benjamin's safe return. He emphasized how unbearable it would be for their father if they returned without Benjamin, and how such news could hasten his death. Judah then offered himself as a substitute for Benjamin, willing to become a slave in Egypt, so that their father's heart might find some solace after the loss of Joseph, his other beloved son by the same mother.

According to the Torah, Joseph was so moved by Judah's plea that he could no longer contain his emotions in front of his attendants. He ordered everyone to leave the room. Alone with his brothers, he wept aloud, a cry so intense that even the Egyptians and Pharaoh's household heard it. Gathering himself, Joseph declared to his stunned brothers: 'I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?' Overwhelmed by emotion and shock, his brothers could not respond, being deeply terrified in his presence.

Joseph said to his brothers, 'Come closer to me.' When they had approached, he revealed, 'I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. Now, do not be distressed or angry with yourselves for having sold me here. It was God's plan to send me ahead of you to preserve life. For

there has been famine in the land for two years, and for five more years, there will neither be plowing nor harvest. God sent me before you to ensure that you have a remnant on earth and to save your lives in a great escape. So, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me an adviser to Pharaoh, the lord of his entire household, and the ruler over all of Egypt.

Hurry back to our father and tell him, 'Your son Joseph says: Come down to me without delay and settle in the region of Goshen. You will be near me, along with your children, your grandchildren, your flocks, herds, and everything you possess. I will sustain you there during the five years of famine, so you, your household, and all that you own will not come to poverty.' See for yourselves, and even my brother Benjamin can confirm, that it is truly I who speak to you. Relay all the wonders you have witnessed in Egypt and quickly bring our father here.' Then he embraced his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin wept on his shoulder. Joseph kissed all his brothers and cried over them.

The Torah narrative continues, detailing how he provided them with provisions and sent them to Canaan. They informed their father of Joseph's well-being and recounted the entire story. Jacob was overjoyed and journeyed with his entire family, numbering seventy in total, to Egypt. They settled in the region of Goshen. Joseph traveled there to meet his arriving father, and upon seeing him, they embraced tightly and wept for a long time. Jacob and his sons were given residence in the region and were highly esteemed by Pharaoh. Pharaoh granted them fertile lands in the best parts of Egypt. Throughout the drought-stricken years, Joseph provided for them. After reuniting with Joseph, Jacob lived in Egypt for another seventeen years.

This narrative from the Torah, aligning closely with the Qur'an, is summarized here, omitting some details only for clarity and brevity.

An Excursus on the Nature of Dreams

1. Concern with Them:

People have been profoundly concerned with the matter of visions and dreams since ancient times, so much so that the historical origin of this interest cannot be pinpointed. Every nation has had its distinct rules and measures by which they have evaluated dreams, interpreted them, unraveled their symbolism, and resolved the mysteries of their signs, expecting

either good, evil, benefit, or harm based on their interpretations.

The Qur'an has also addressed this matter. God narrated the vision of Abraham concerning his son, saying: *When he was old enough to assist in his endeavor, he said, 'My son! I see in a dream that I am sacrificing you. See what you think.' He said, 'Father! Do whatever you have been commanded ...' (*37:105).

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And there is the vision that God relayed of Joseph: 'When Joseph said to his father *When Joseph said to his father, 'Father! I saw eleven planets, and the sun and the moon: I saw them prostrating themselves before me.'* (12:4).

There is also the vision of Joseph's two prison mates: *One of them said, 'I dreamed that I am pressing wine.' The other said, 'I dreamed that I am carrying bread on my head from which the birds are eating.' 'Inform us of its interpretation, for indeed we see you to be a virtuous man*' (12:36).

And the vision of the king: *The king said, 'I saw in a dream seven fat cows being devoured by seven lean ones, and seven green ears and others dry. O courtiers, give me your opinion about my dream, if you can interpret dreams'* (12:43).

The vision of Moses' mother was mentioned: *when We revealed to your mother whatever was revealed: 'Put him in the casket, and cast it into the river. Then the river will cast it on the bank ...'* (20:39). According to narrations, this was also a dream.

Furthermore, there are the visions of the Prophet Muḥammad, where God said: *When Allah showed them to you as few in your dream, and had He shown them as many, you would have lost heart, and disputed about the matter ...* (8:43). And, *Certainly Allah has fulfilled His Messenger's vision in all truth: You will surely enter the Sacred Mosque, God willing, in safety ...* (48:27). And, '*We showed you except as a test for the people ...* (17:60). Many traditions that have been narrated support and confirm these visions, as recounted by the Prophet Muḥammad and the Imāms of the Household of the Prophet.

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However, the researchers from the natural sciences in Europe do not acknowledge the existence of true dreams nor deem it necessary to study their relevance and connection to external events. Scientifically, such dreams do not carry any weight for them, with the exception of some psychologists who have shown interest in the subject. These psychologists have countered the skepticism by citing numerous verified dreams that

astonishingly predict future events or reveal hidden matters, which cannot simply be dismissed as mere coincidence or chance. Such dreams, conveyed through reliable channels and devoid of any doubt, disclose undisclosed or future events, and have been recorded in their books.

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2. On the Nature of Dreams:

Every one of us has personally experienced dreams or visions that point toward some hidden matters, scholarly conundrums, or future events, be they of good or bad nature. We might have also heard of dreams of this nature from others. It is not possible to merely attribute these to coincidence or dismiss any connection between them and their accurate interpretations, especially for those clear dreams that do not require any interpretation.

Undeniably, dreams are a cognitive experience, and imagination plays a role in them. The imaginative power is always active, sometimes processing information received from sensory experiences, such as touch and hearing, and sometimes composing images, simple or complex, based on stored symbols and meanings. It breaks down composite images, like a complete human figure into its parts—a head, a hand, a leg, and so on—and assembles simple ones, like constructing a human figure from stored body parts. At times, these compositions match external reality, while at other times, they diverge, as in imagining a human without a head or one with ten heads.

External factors surrounding the body, such as heat or cold, and internal sudden changes, like various illnesses, impairments, mood swings, a full stomach, fatigue, and others, influence the imaginative process, and hence affect the content of a person's dreams. For example, someone feeling extreme heat or cold might dream of raging fires or harsh winters and falling snow respectively. Someone overwhelmed by warmth leading to sweat may dream of baths, water reservoirs, or rain showers. A person experiencing stress or a full stomach may experience unclear dreams with no evident purpose. Similarly, human character traits profoundly influence one's imaginative type. A person deeply fond of someone or passionate about a task will likely think of them while awake and dream of them while asleep. A timid, easily frightened individual may, upon hearing a sudden noise, conjure up terrifying images without basis. Similarly, feelings of animosity,

admiration, arrogance, greed, and their like, pull a person's imagination in specific directions, producing images that resonate with those emotions. Rarely does a person escape the dominance of these traits over his nature.

Most visions and dreams arise from psychological imaginings which external and internal, both natural and innate factors, contribute to. These factors only narrate to the mind how they operate and their impact upon it; there's no deeper truth beyond that.

This is what the skeptics, particularly natural scientists, have pointed out. Their stance mainly revolves around enumerating the factors that contribute to our imagination and human perception.

Yet, what is unanimously agreed upon, but not explicitly stated, is not that all visions lack authenticity. To claim this is false, as not all dreams are void of truth. Indeed, there are true dreams and authentic visions that reveal facts about objective reality. There is no denying their existence or the connection between them and external events or hidden matters, as previously mentioned.

From what has been discussed, it is evident that not all visions seen while a person sleeps are devoid of truth. This means that these diverse perceptions, which the human mind encounters in dreams and which we call visions, have origins and reasons that justify their existence and appearance in our imagination. Regardless of their differences, they relate and represent their roots and reasons. Every dream has an interpretation. Some are interpreted based on the natural cause acting within the body during sleep; others are due to internal factors, while some are from diverse incidental causes, like when one falls asleep while deeply pondering over a matter and then dreams something related to that thought.

The inquiry is primarily into one type of these dreams, those visions that do not rely on external natural, temperamental, or coincidental causes nor on inherent internal ones but are connected to external events and universal truths.

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3. True Dreams:

True dreams (*manāmāt ḥaqqa*) are those that have a connection with external events, especially events that take place in the future, like seeing something that does not yet exist coming to pass and then it takes place in reality just as envisioned. There's no existential connection between

something that exists and something that does not or something that is absent from one's consciousness and not perceived through any senses. For instance, someone might dream that in a certain place there's a stash of gold and silver in a particular container, and upon acting upon this dream, they find the container and its contents just as they saw it in the dream. There's no perceptual connection between the psyche and what is absent from it and unreachable by its senses.

Thus, some have said that the only connection between these events and the dreaming soul is due to the soul's interaction with an event's cause that lies beyond the realm of matter. Consequently, the soul connects to the cause of the event and, through that cause, to the event itself.

To clarify, there are three realms:

(1) The realm of nature (*ʿālam al-ṭabīʿa*), which is the worldly domain (*dunyā*) we inhabit. The entities within it are material forms that operate according to principles of motion, stillness, change, and transformation.

(2) The realm of archetypes (*ʿālam al-mithāl*), which exists above the realm of nature. It contains forms of things without any material substance, from which natural events descend and to which they return. This realm has a superior standing and causative relationship to the events of the natural world.

(3) The realm of intellect (*ʿālam al-ʿaql*), which is situated above the realm of exemplars. Within it lie the realities of entities and their universals, devoid of any natural substance or form. It has a causative relationship to what exists in the realm of exemplars.

Given the human soul's immaterial nature, it resonates with both the realm of exemplars and the realm of intellect. When a person sleeps and the senses are dormant, the soul naturally detaches from external natural matters and reverts to its resonating realm, witnessing some of its truths, contingent upon its readiness and capability.

If the soul is complete and adept at grasping abstract intellectual entities, it perceives and brings forth the causes of entities in their universality and luminosity. Otherwise, it narrates them in an imaginative manner, relating to the forms and cosmic particularities it is familiar with, just as we convey the concept of speed through the image of a fast-moving object, the concept of greatness via a mountain, the concept of elevation and loftiness

through the sky and its celestial bodies, cunningness and deceit through a fox, envy through a wolf, bravery through a lion, and so forth.

If the soul is not capable of comprehending abstracts as they are and ascending to their realm, it halts in the realm of exemplars, having ascended from the realm of nature. It may then witness events by observing their causes and reasons without actively intervening or altering anything. This often occurs in souls that are pure and characterized by truthfulness and clarity; these are termed as clear dreams (*manāmāt ṣarīḥa*).

At times, the soul may relate what it has seen using familiar metaphors and symbols, such as representing marriage with putting on items of clothing, honor with a crown, knowledge with light, ignorance with darkness, and the extinguishing of memory with death. Sometimes we transition from one opposite to another, as our minds shift from the concept of poverty when hearing of wealth, from the image of fire to that of ice, or from the concept of life to that of death, and so on. An example of this type of dream was recounted where a man saw in his dream that he had a seal with which he sealed people's mouths and private parts. When he asked Ibn Sīrīn for its interpretation, he replied: 'You will become a caller to prayer in the month of Ramaḍān, and people will fast based on your call.'

From the above discussion, it becomes clear that true dreams can be primarily divided into two categories: clear dreams (*manāmāt ṣarīḥa*) where the sleeping soul has not intervened, which can be interpreted directly without any hindrance, and unclear dreams (*manāmāt ghayr ṣarīḥa*) where the soul intervenes by narrating through metaphors and transitioning from one meaning to its counterpart or its opposite. These require interpretation by referring back to the higher principle that the soul first observed and translated into an image, like relating the crown back to pride, death back to life, life back to relief after hardship, darkness to ignorance, confusion, or misery.

The second category further divides into two subcategories. The first is where the soul narrates and moves from one thing to its counterpart or its opposite, perhaps once or twice, making it relatively easy to revert back to its primary meaning, as exemplified earlier. The second is where the soul narrates without any fixed reference, transitioning, for instance, from one thing to its opposite, then from the opposite to something similar, and from the likeness of the opposite to its counter-opposite, and so

on. This makes it challenging or impossible for the interpreter to trace back to the original vision. These types of dreams are termed 'confused dreams' (*aḍghāth al-aḥlām*) and are usually not interpretable due to their complexity or ambiguity.

Thus, it becomes evident that dreams can be classified into three main categories: clear dreams (*manāmāt ṣarīḥa*) that do not require interpretation due to their straightforward nature, confused dreams (*aḍghāth al-aḥlām*) that are not interpretable due to their complexity, and dreams where the soul narrates with metaphors and symbolic representations, which are interpretable.

The summarizes what the ancient scholars of the soul (*'ulamā' al-nafs*) have discussed about dreams and their in-depth investigation. Readers requiring further details can refer to the texts they have written on this subject.

Support for this in the Qur'an:

There is evidence that supports this notion found in the Qur'an. For example, God says: *It is He who takes your souls by night* (6:60). He also states: *Allah takes the souls at the time of their death, and those who have not died in their sleep. Then He retains those for whom He has ordained death and releases the others until a specified time* (39:42). The apparent meaning is that souls are taken away and separated from their bodies, disconnected from the physical senses, and return to their Lord in a manner that is analogous to death.

Within the Qur'anic discourse, references can be found to each of the three aforementioned categories of dreams. From the first category, we have examples like the vision of Abraham, the vision of the mother of Moses, and some of the visions of the Prophet Muḥammad. From the second category, there is the verse: *They said, 'Confused nightmares, and we do not know the interpretation of nightmares'* (12:44). From the third category, there are Joseph's dreams, the dreams of his two prison companions, and the dream of the Egyptian king, all of which are mentioned in the chapter of Joseph.

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Verses 103-111

This section contains the concluding verses of Sūrah Yūsuf. Its central message is that true faith, which is nothing other than pure monotheism, is very hard to attain, such that very few people ever truly achieve it. The majority are not true believers, even if you are keen for them to have faith and strive diligently for this aim. Among those few believers, many of them still have a faith tainted with some form of polytheism. Therefore, only a very small number truly embody pure faith and unadulterated monotheism.

This pure monotheism is the path of the Prophet which he invites people to follow with clear insight, as do those who follow him. God supports and saves him and those believers who follow him from perils that threaten their monotheism and faith. Furthermore, there awaits a punishment for the idolaters, just as it has been the divine modus operandi in the cases of earlier prophets, as evident from their stories. These stories of earlier prophets contain lessons, expositions of higher truths, guidance, and mercy for the believers.

وَمَا أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

(12:103) Yet most people will not have faith, however eager you should be.

This statement suggests that the majority of people, due to their deep attachment to the life of this world, their attraction to its allures, and their negligence of the innate knowledge of God and His signs that He secreted within their very nature as human beings, will not believe, no matter how ardently you might desire them to have faith. The evidence for this claim is provided in the subsequent verses.

وَمَا تَسْأَلُهُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠٤﴾

(12:104) You do not ask them any reward for it: it is just a reminder for all the nations.

This implies that even though they do not believe, you do not ask them

for any remuneration for their faith or for this Qur'an that has been revealed to you and which you recite to them. This indicates that it is not financial costs or the prospect of spending their cherished wealth that deters them from accepting its message and believing in it.

The statement, *it is just a reminder for all the nations*, serves to clarify the actual purpose of the Qur'an: It is purely a reminder for all of humanity, invoking in them what God has instilled within the hearts of all different groups of people regarding knowledge of Him and His signs. Thus, the Qur'an serves merely as a reminder of what heedlessness and indifference have caused most of them to forget. It is not a commodity with which one earns wealth or attains honor, prestige, or anything else.

وَكَأَيِّن مِّن آيَةٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ يَمُرُّونَ عَلَيْهَا وَهُمْ عَنْهَا مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

(12:105) How many a sign there is (*wa ka-ayyin min āyah*) in the heavens and the earth that they pass by (*yamurrūn ʿalay-hā*) while they are disregardful of it!

The *waw* at the beginning of the verse could be read as adverbial (that is, 'While how many a sign there is...') or as signaling the beginning of a new discourse (which is how it has been translated here).

The verb *murūr* (from whence *yamurrūn ʿalayh-hā* is derived) means to come across across something and then move beyond it, as if to leave it behind. In this context, passing by the celestial and terrestrial signs means witnessing them one after another.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is that there are numerous signs, both celestial and terrestrial, that, by virtue of their very existence and the exquisite order they exhibit, point toward the oneness of their Creator. These signs appear to them repeatedly, and yet, they turn away from them, remaining heedless.

If the statement, *that they pass by*, is taken literally rather than metaphorically, it serves as evidence for what modern astronomy posits about Earth's movement, both its rotation and orbit. We, while dwelling on the surface of the Earth, 'pass by' celestial bodies due to Earth's translational and rotational movements, contrary to what our senses perceive.

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُم مُّشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٠٦﴾

(12:106) And most of them do not believe in Allah without ascribing partners to Him.

This refers back to people in the context of their faith, or lack thereof. It implies that most people are not true believers, even if you do not ask them for any compensation and even if they come across numerous celestial and terrestrial signs of God's oneness. And among those who do believe—who are the minority—most of them do not truly believe in God without mixing their faith with some form of polytheism.

Human beings can exhibit both faith in the One God and polytheism simultaneously, despite these two concepts being diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive. This resembles how individuals can hold contradictory beliefs and opposing values simultaneously. Such coexistence can be understood in terms of concepts that accommodate both intensity and weakness, thereby varying in degrees of intensity and strength of association. For example, the notions of proximity and distance are contradictory in absolute terms. However, when considered in relative terms, they can coexist harmoniously. Mecca is close in relation to Medina but far in comparison to Syria. Similarly, when Mecca is measured in relation to Medina, it is close, but when measured against Baghdad, it is distant.

Faith in God and associating partners with Him are two distinct realities. The essence of faith is to connect one's heart to God with submission to His ultimate reality. On the other hand, polytheism is attaching one's heart to entities other than God, entities that have no power except by His permission. These two stances differ based on degree and association. Therefore, it is possible for a person to become engrossed in the fleeting life and its deceptive allure, forgetting all truths. Conversely, it is also possible for one to disconnect from all distractions, focusing solely on God, remembering Him continuously, relying solely on His essence and attributes, and desiring only what He desires. This is the characteristic of God's truly devoted followers.

Between these two positions lie various levels and degrees, defined by their proximity or distance from each end of the spectrum. In these levels, elements of both faith and polytheism coexist to some extent. This is evident in the characteristics and traits deeply ingrained in souls that act

contrary to their professed beliefs, whether true or false. For instance, an individual might claim they have faith in God, yet their heart trembles in fear at the hint of any impending calamity. They might seek honor and status from others, even while reciting God's words, *All honor belongs to Allah* (10:65). They knock on every door seeking sustenance, even though God has guaranteed it for them. They might disobey God without feeling any shame, despite believing that God knows their innermost thoughts, hears their words, sees their actions, and nothing is hidden from Him on earth or in the heavens.

Hence, the polytheism referenced in the verse pertains to certain levels of it that can coexist with certain levels of faith. This is termed, in moral philosophy, as 'hidden polytheism' (*al-shirk al-khafī*).

Therefore, the claims suggesting that the polytheists in the verse refer exclusively to the idol-worshippers of Mecca are misplaced. Similarly, asserting that they refer specifically to the hypocrites (*munāfiqūn*) narrows the broad scope of the verse without a strong reason to do so.

أَفَأَمِنُواْ أَن تَأْتِيَهُمْ غَاشِيَةٌ مِّنْ عَذَابِ اللَّهِ أَوْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لاَ يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٠٧﴾

(12:107) Do they feel secure from being overtaken by a blanket punishment from Allah (*ghāshiya min ʿadhāb Allāh*), or being overtaken by the Hour, suddenly (*baghtatan*), while they are unaware?

The term *ghāshiya* ('blanket') here refers to an enveloping punishment, which is a divine punishment that encompasses and surrounds them.

Baghtatan ('suddenly') refers to the unexpectedness of this punishment. When God says, *while they are unaware*, it refers to the state of people being caught off guard by the Hour, without any prior signs indicating its exact time or clear onset. This rhetorical question expresses astonishment, implying how strange it is for people to neglect the divine signs visible throughout the heavens and the earth, to lack pure faith in God, and to be deeply engrossed in the heedlessness of this world. How do they feel so certain that they won't be enveloped by God's punishment or that the Hour will not surprise and confound them?

قُلْ هَٰذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا۠ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَا۠ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٠٨﴾

(12:108) Say, 'This is my way. I summon to Allah with insight—I and he who follows me. Immaculate is Allah, and I am not one of the polytheists.'

After emphasizing that the essence of pure belief in Him and pure monotheism is the manifest truth that is pointed to by the signs He has placed throughout the heavens and the earth, God commands His Prophet to clarify that his way is to call toward this monotheism with clear understanding and insight.

When he says, '*This is my way*,' it serves as a declaration of his approach. *I summon to Allah with insight* 'elaborates on the nature of that path. '*Immaculate is Allah*' emphasizes His utter transcendence. And by saying '*and I am not one of the polytheists*,' it accentuates the essence of his call to God and underscores that this invitation isn't just any call toward God but is fundamentally based on pure monotheism, never tainted by any form of associating partners with Him.

As for when he says, '*I and he who follows me*,' this phrase broadens and generalizes the responsibility of this call. Even though the path is distinctly the Prophet's, the duty of calling to it and upholding it is not exclusive to him. Everyone who truly follows him also undertakes this responsibility for themselves.

However, the context suggests that this association is not as broad as implied by '*and he who follows me*.' The path defined by the verse refers to inviting others on the basis of clear insight and genuine conviction to pure faith and real monotheism. Only those genuinely devoted to God in their faith, knowledgeable about the stature of their Lord, possessing insight and certainty, can truly share in this with others. And not everyone who claims to follow the Prophet fits this description. It is not presumed that every believer enjoys such an elevated spiritual status, especially those whom God, in the previous verse, categorized as polytheists and criticized for being heedless of their Lord, feeling safe from His devising, and turning away from His signs. How can one who is oblivious of God, feeling safe from His punishment, and turning away from all His reminders and

signs, call others to Him? God has, in numerous verses, described those with such attributes as being misguided, blind, and in a state of loss. Such traits certainly cannot coexist with true guidance and direction.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن قَبْلِكَ إِلاَّ رِجَالاً نُّوحِي إِلَيْهِم مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَى أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُواْ فِي الأَرْضِ فَيَنظُرُواْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَدَارُ الآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِينَ اتَّقَواْ أَفَلاَ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

(12:109) We did not send any before you except as men to whom We revealed from among the people of the towns. Have they not traveled over the land so that they may observe how was the fate of those who were before them? And the abode of the Hereafter is surely better for those who are Godwary. Do you not apply reason?

After describing the state of people in terms of their faith in Him and the state of the Prophet, who calls them to a divine message without asking for any reward or seeking any personal benefit, God now explains that this is nothing novel. On the contrary, the preaching of the Prophet follows the divine modus operandi of religious preaching. The messengers before were not angels but were chosen from among the very people to whom they were sent to preach. They were men from the towns who mingled with people and who were known to them, and God revealed His message to them and sent them to invite other people to Him, just as the Prophet did. Moreover, it is possible for those who the Prophet invites in his own time to travel the land and see what became of those nations before them: The ruins of their lands and their deserted dwellings bear witness to what became of them and foretell the consequences of their disbelief, denial, and rejection of God's signs.

The Prophet invites his people to God in the same manner as the prophets before him did with their own peoples. He calls them only toward what is in their best interest and beneficial to their well-being, which is to fear God, succeed in this world, and attain eternal happiness and lasting pleasure in a perpetual abode. Indeed, the Hereafter is better for those who are righteous; do they not understand?

The passage, *We did not send any before you except as men to whom*

We revealed from among the people of the towns, is a confirmation that the Prophet's message is consistent with those of the messengers who came before him. Perhaps they are described as being from the towns to emphasize that they lived among the people, were known to them through interactions, and were not angels or outsiders. This is supported by their description as 'men,' for men are more familiar than veiled women.

When God asks, *Have they not traveled over the land so that they may observe how was the fate of those who were before them?*, this is meant as a warning to the Prophet's community, much like the vanished communities that did not heed the warnings of their own messengers and thus suffered the consequences of their deeds.

And the abode of the Hereafter is surely better for those who are Godwary. Do you not apply reason? This is the succinct exposition of the core of the Prophet's message from another angle, namely that what they are invited to, namely piety and Godwariness (*taqwā*), has only good in store for them and contains their ultimate happiness.

حَتَّى إِذَا اسْتَيْأَسَ الرُّسُلُ وَظَنُّواْ أَنَّهُمْ قَدْ كُذِبُواْ جَاءَهُمْ نَصْرُنَا فَنُجِّيَ
مَن نَّشَاء وَلاَ يُرَدُّ بَأْسُنَا عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١١٠﴾

(12:110) When the messengers lost hope (*istay'asa al-rusul*) and they thought that they had been told lies, Our help came to them, and We delivered whomever We wished, and Our punishment will not be averted from the guilty lot.

The verbs *ya's* ('to despair') and *istay'asa* ('to lose hope') have similar meanings. One could say that the subtle distinction between them is that *istay'asa* means to approach *ya's* (that is, the loss of hope signals the approach of despair) and to begin showing signs of it, because the verb *istay'asa* is a Form X (*bāb al-istifʿāl*) verb (one of whose meanings is to approach or seek the meaning of the root, in this case *ya's* or 'despair'). Therefore, while in common parlance *istay'asa* and *ya's* might be treated as synonymously, *istay'asa* is not complete and utter despair, but rather the sensation of its onset.

Regarding the statement. *When the messengers lost hope ...*, this pertains to the ultimate goal that was referenced in the preceding verse. Therefore, the meaning is: 'Those messengers, who were men just like you from the

towns and their distant cities, called to their people, but they did not respond. They warned them of God's punishment, but they would not desist. Until, when the messengers despaired of their people ever believing them and the people to whom they had sent thought that the messengers had lied—meaning they falsely conveyed warnings of punishment—Our help came, and with it, We saved those whom we willed, and they were the believers. Our might and our wrath does not turn away from the guilty lot.'

As for the messengers' despairing of their people's faith, it is as related in the story of Noah: *It was revealed to Noah: 'None of your people will believe except those who already have faith; so do not sorrow for what they used to do'* (11:36). Noah's plea is also recorded as, *'My Lord! 'Do not leave on the earth any inhabitant from among the faithless. If You leave them, they will lead astray Your servants and will not beget except vicious ingrates* (71:27). Similar accounts can be found in the stories of Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Shuʿayb, Moses, and Jesus.

As for the fact that their people thought the messengers had lied to them, this is portrayed in Noah's story, when his people told him, '*Rather we consider you to be liars*' (11:27). Similar instances can be found in the stories of Hūd and Ṣāliḥ, and in Pharaoh's words to Moses: *Pharaoh said to him, 'O Moses, indeed I think you are bewitched'* (17:101).

And as for God saving the believers with His help, this is akin to the verses,

Regarding the salvation of the believers with help, it is like God's declaration: *Certainly We sent messengers to their people before you, and they brought them manifest proofs. Then We took vengeance upon those who were guilty, and it was a must for Us to help the faithful.* (30:47). This is further elucidated in the destruction of certain nations, such as when He says, *And when Our edict came, We delivered Hūd and the faithful who were with him* (11:58), *So when Our edict came, We delivered Ṣāliḥ and the faithful who were with him* (11:66), and *And when Our edict came, We delivered Shu'ayb and the faithful who were with him* (11:94), among other instances.

As for the undeniable fact that God's punishment will befall the guilty, it is mentioned in numerous verses both generally and specifically, like His statement: *There is an messenger for every nation; so when their messenger comes, judgment is made between them with justice, and they are not wronged* (10:47). Then there is the verse: *And when Allah wishes to visit*

ill on a people, there is nothing that can avert it, and they have no protector besides Him (13:11), among many other verses. This is the best explanation of the verse of the various meanings given. The evidence for this is that the content of the verse in such a reading serves as the culmination of the message of the previous verse, as we have already mentioned. Other explanations have been suggested by commentators, but none of them are free from weaknesses. Therefore, it is best to put them aside.

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَىٰ
وَلَٰكِن تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ
يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١١١﴾

(12:111) There is certainly a moral (*ʿibra*) in their accounts for those who possess intellect. This is not a fabricated discourse; rather it is a confirmation of what was before it, and an elaboration of all things, and a guidance and mercy for a people who have faith.

According to al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī: 'The root *ʿabara* (from whence *ʿibra* is derived) means to cross from one state of being to another (*al-ʿabar min hālin ilā hāl*), the term *ʿubūr* refers specifically to crossing over water ... while *iʿtibār* and *ʿibra* mean to transition from witnessing an event to understanding an unseen implication thereof. As God states: *There is indeed a moral in that* (inna fī dhālika la-ʿibra).'

The pronoun 'their' in *their accounts* refers to the prophets, one of whom is Joseph, the main subject of the present chapter. It could also possibly refer to Joseph and his brothers. Therefore, the essene of its meaning is: 'Indeed, in the stories of the prophets *or* in the accounts of Joseph and his brothers, there is a lesson for those with intellect. The story recounted in this chapter is not a fabricated tale, but rather a confirmation of what preceded the Qur'an, which is the Torah in which this story is mentioned, which is the scripture of Moses.

Regarding the phrase: '... *and an elaboration of all things* ...,' it means a clear and distinguishing explanation of everything that people need for their faith, and upon which their happiness in this world and the hereafter depends. This guidance leads them to prosperity and success and is a special

mercy from God, exalted is He, for those who believe in Him. For them, it is a mercy from God, which guides them to a straight path.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, it is narrated from al-Fuḍayl, from Abū Jaʿfar al-Bāqir, regarding the verse, *And most of them do not believe in Allah without ascribing partners to Him* (12:106): '"Ascribing partners" (*shirk*) here refers to obedience (*ṭāʿa*) rather than worship (*ʿibāda*). The sins they commit are a form of associating partners with God in obedience; they obeyed Satan in these acts, thus associating with God obedience to another, and not associating with God worshipping of someone other than Him.'

(2) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated by Muḥammad b. al-Fuḍayl, from al-Riḍā: 'This is a form of associating partners with God that does not amount to disbelief.'

(3) And in the same source, it is narrated from Mālik ibn ʿAṭiyya from Abū ʿAbd Allah regarding the same verse: 'It is when someone says, "If it wasn't for so-and-so, I would have perished" or "If not for so-and-so, I would have suffered such and such, and my family would have been ruined." Do you not see that he is attributing to God a partner in His sovereignty that provides for him and repels harm?' The narrator asked: 'Suppose someone says, "If not for God's favor upon me through so-and-so, I would have perished"—is that acceptable?' He replied: 'Yes, there is no problem with this.'

(4) In the same source, it is narrated from Zurāra: 'I asked Abū Jaʿfar about God's saying, *And most of them do not believe in Allah without ascribing partners to Him*. He said: 'This refers to when someone says, "No, by your life (*lā wa ḥayātak*)."'

Author's comment: This means swearing by someone other than God, as it elevates the entity in a manner of which they are undeserving. There are numerous reports in this regard.

(5) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates via his chain of narrators from Salām b. al-Mustanīr from Abū Jaʿfar regarding the verse: *Say, 'This is my way. I summon to Allah with insight—I and he who follows me...'* (12:108). He told me: 'This refers to the Messenger of God and the Commander of the Faithful, and the legatees

(*awṣiyā'*) after them.'

(6) In the same source, al-Kulaynī narrates from Abū ʿAmr al-Zubayrī, from Abū ʿAbd Allāh, regarding the same verse. He said: 'It refers to ʿAlī: The first of those who followed him in faith and believed in him and in what he brought from God, the Almighty and Majestic, from among the community from whom he came, among whom he was raised up, and to whom he was sent, before anyone else; who never associated partners with God and never mixed his faith with wrongdoing (*ẓulm*), which is associating partners with God.'

Author's comment: The two narrations support our earlier explanation of the verse. There are other narrations in the same vein, and perhaps this is a case in which the general meaning of the verse is being applied to a specific and exemplary context.

(7) In the same source, al-Kulaynī narrates from Hishām b. al-Ḥakam, who said: 'I asked Abū ʿAbd Allāh about God's statement: "Glory be to God." What does it mean? He replied: God's self-exaltation.

(8) And from Hishām al-Jawālīqī, he said: I asked Abū ʿAbd Allāh about God's statement, the Mighty and Majestic: '*Immaculate is Allah* (subḥān Allāh).' He replied: 'It signifies His transcendence above all things.'

(9) In *Maʿāni al-akhbār*, al-Ṣadūq narrates via his chain from al-Sayyar, from al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī, from his forefathers, from al-Ṣādiq, in a tradition in which he delivered a sermon: 'Don't you know that God, the Exalted, never left the earth without a prophet or a leader among humans? Does not God the Exalted say: *We did not send any before you* ...—meaning to the creation—... *except as men to whom We revealed from among the people of the towns*? So, He informed that He did not send angels to earth to be leaders and rulers, but they were sent to the prophets to deliver His revelations.'

(10) In *ʿUyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā*, al-Ṣadūq narrates via his chain of transmitters from ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. al-Jahm: 'I attended a meeting with the caliph al-Ma'mūn, and with him was al-Riḍā, ʿAlī b. Mūsā. Al-Ma'mūn asked him, "O scion of God's Messenger, do you not believe that the prophets are infallible?" He replied,

"Yes." ... al-Ma'mūn asked Abū al-Ḥasan, "Can you explain to me what God means when he says, *When the messengers lost hope and they thought that they had been told lies, Our help came to them*?" Al-Riḍā replied, "God is saying that when the messengers despair of their people, and their people think that the messengers are lying, then Our support comes to the messengers."

Author's comment: This supports what we have previously stated in the interpretation of the verse. Those narrations which claim that the messengers thought that Satan was appearing to them in the guise of angels in order to deceive them cannot be relied upon.

(11) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from al-Zurāra: 'I asked Abū ʿAbd Allāh: "How is it that God's Messenger did not fear that what came to him from God could have been an inspiration from Satan?" He replied, "When God chooses a servant as a messenger, He bestows upon him tranquility (*sakīna*) and dignity (*waqqār*), and what comes to him from God is as clear as what he sees with his own eyes.'

(12) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn Jarīr and Ibn al-Mundhir narrate from Ibrāhīm, from Abū Hamza al-Jazarī, who said: 'I prepared a meal and invited some of our companions, including Saʿīd b. Jubayr and al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim. A young man from the Quraysh asked Saʿīd b. Jubayr: "O Abū ʿAbd Allāh, how do you recite this verse? For whenever I come across it, I wish I did not have to recite this chapter: *When the messengers lost hope and they thought that they had been told lies* ..." He answered, "Yes, until the messengers despair of their people believing them, and the one to whom they were sent thinks that the messengers are lying." Al-Ḍaḥḥāk then said, "If I had to travel to Yemen for this understanding of the verse, it would have been a small price to pay."'

End of Chapter 12

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Chapter 13

Sūrah al-Ra'd (The Thunder)

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بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

Verses 1-4

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the truth of what was revealed to the Prophet of the Book and to show that it is a mark of his messengership. Furthermore, it aims to reject the argument made by the Prophet's opponents, *'Why has not some sign been sent down to him from his Lord?'* (13:7), which they utter while they turn their backs on the Qur'an and do not count it as a sign. Therefore, the Prophet should not pay any attention to it, nor should they voice it.

This is highlighted by the chapter's opening, which begins with the phrase, *That which has been sent down to you from your Lord is the truth, but most people do not believe*. It is also highlighted by its conclusion, which reads, *The faithless say, 'You have not been sent.' Say, 'Allah suffices as a witness between me and you, and he who possesses the knowledge of the Book'* (13:43), and by the repetition of their statement, *'Why has not some sign been sent down to him from his Lord?'* (13:7 and 13:27).

The essence of these verse's message to the Prophet is that this Qur'an, which was revealed to you, is pure truth untainted by any kind of falsehood. The call to believe in God's oneness, which is demonstrated by the signs of the universe such as the raising of the heavens, the spreading of the earth, the harnessing of the sun and the moon, and all the miraculous features of His divine management and extraordinary control that are contained within it.

The truth of his call is also demonstrated by the accounts of past nations and what befell them. Their messengers came to them with clear signs, but they disbelieved and denied, so God punished them for their sins. This is what this Book contains, and it is a sign demonstrating the truth of the Prophetic message.

The Prophet is told to ignore the repeated refrain of his opponents, *'Why has not some sign been sent down to him from his Lord?,'* which is a subtle dig at the Qur'an by them, for the following reasons: First, you are only a warner and have no control over the matter to make such a demand of you. Second, guidance and misguidance are not, as they claim, within the power of God's signs, such that they can hope to be guided by a sign they demanded. Rather, the matter is up to God Almighty. He misguides whom He wills and guides whom He wills according to a system founded on His wisdom. As for their statement, *'You have not been sent,'* God's testimony in His speech to your messengership and the evidence of the true knowledge contained in your revelation should suffice as proof for you that they are wrong.

Some of the manifest truths contained in this chapter of the Qur'an are found in the verse, *He sends down water from the sky ...* (13:17), His statement, *Look! The hearts find rest in Allah's remembrance!* (13:28), and His statement, *Allah effaces and confirms whatever He wishes and with Him is the Mother Book* (13:39), and His statement, *yet all devising belongs to Allah* (13:42).

The chapter is entirely Meccan in provenance, as indicated by the context of its verses and the contents thereof. Some have reported that it is Meccan except for the last verse, which was revealed in Medina about ʿAbd Allāh bin Salām. This view has been attributed to al-Kalbī and Muqātil, but it is refuted by the fact that the conclusion of the chapter closely corresponds with its opening verse, *That which has been sent down to you from your Lord is the truth* (13:1), and must therefore have originated in the same context as it.

Some have said that the entire chapter is Medinan, except for two verses, those being, *If only it were a Qur'an whereby the mountains could be moved ...* (13:31) and the verse immediately after it. This view has been attributed to al-Ḥasan, ʿIkrima, and Qatāda. However, this is refuted by the context of the verses and their contents, as these do not correspond

with the circumstances in Medina after the Emigration.

It has also been said that the Medinan part of the chapter is God's statement, *The faithless will continue to be visited by catastrophes because of their doings* ... (13:31) and the rest is Meccan. Proponents of this view argue say that this verse matches the context of the early state of Islam after the migration but before the conquest of Mecca. The erroneousness of this view will become clear when we discuss the verse in full, below.

Commentary

الٓمٓرٰ تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ وَالَّذِىٓ أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ الْحَقُّ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١﴾

(13:1) *Alif, Lām, Mīm, Ra*. These are the signs of the Book. That which has been sent down to you from your Lord is the truth, but most people do not believe.

The disconnected letters at the opening of this chapter are a combination of those which open the chapters beginning *alif lām mīm* and those which open the chapters beginning *alif lām rā'*. This reflects the fact that the teachings expressed in the present chapter appear to be combination of the teachings contained in those two categories of chapter. We will elaborate further on this, below.

These are the signs (āyāt) *of the Book*—the apparent context of the verse and the three verses that follow it, given their obvious connection with one another, suggest that these *āyāt* refer to signs of monotheism that can be observed in the cosmos. For example, the raising of the heavens, the spreading of the earth, the harnessing of the sun and the moon, and other things that point to God's oneness. These verses remind us that contemplating the details of these signs and pondering deeply on them leads us to become certain about the origin of the cosmos and the return to God, and also certain that the knowledge revealed to the Prophet is the truth.

All of this suggests that the *signs* referred to in the verse, *These are the signs of the Book*, are the visible signs that exist in the cosmos and externally existing entities that are harnessed within the universal divine order. Hence, *the Book* refers to the totality of the cosmos, which is, in one sense, the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*). Alternatively, it could refer to

the Qur'an, insofar as it contains signs of the cosmos in a metaphorical or figurative sense.

On this basis, the verse points to two types of evidence: natural evidence embodied in the cosmic signs of the heavens, the earth, and everything in between, and verbal evidence embodied in the Qur'anic verses revealed by Him to His Prophet. His statement, *but most people do not believe*, is a qualifying clause related to both sentences, meaning His statement, *These are the signs of the Book*, and His statement, *That which has been sent down to you from your Lord is the truth*, and not only the latter sentence in isolation.

Therefore, the meaning of this verse, to the best of my knowledge, is: 'These cosmic matters...'—which are indicated by the distant demonstrative pronoun (*tilka*) as a sign of their high status...—'are the signs of the universal Book of the cosmos. They illustrate that God is one, with no partner in His lordship. The Qur'an, which has been sent down to you from your Lord, is the truth, not falsehood. These signs are decisive in their indication, and this is the truth in its revealed form, but most people do not believe, neither in these tangible signs nor in this revealed truth.' There is a tone of blame and reproof in the phrasing of this verse.

It becomes clear from the above that the use of the definite article *al-* in His statement, *the truth* (*al-ḥaqq*) is to denote exclusivity, signifying that what has been revealed to him is only the truth, not falsehood, nor a mixture of truth and falsehood.

Commentators have offered a variety of different views about the structure of this verse and the meaning of its individual parts, such as what is meant by the demonstrative pronoun *these*, what is meant by *signs*, what is meant by *the Book*, the meaning of the exclusivity in His statement, *the truth*, and what is meant by *most people*. The most apparent and appropriate reading for the verse based on its context is what we have presented above. Those who wish to delve into the particulars of other commentator's views should refer to the detailed commentaries.

اللَّهُ الَّذِی رَفَعَ السَّمَاوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ
وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِی لأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى يُدَبِّرُ الأَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ
الآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُم بِلِقَاء رَبِّكُمْ تُوقِنُونَ ﴿٢﴾

(13:2) It is Allah who raised the heavens without any pillars (*ʿamad*) that you see, and then presided over the Throne. He disposed the sun and the moon, each moving for a specified term. He directs the command, elaborates the signs that you may be certain of encountering your Lord.

In his *Mufradāt*, al-Rāghib writes: 'A pillar (*ʿumūd*) is that upon which the tent rests (*mā taʿtamid ʿalayhi al-khayma*). The plural of this term is *ʿumud* or *ʿamad*. For example, God says: *in outstretched columns* (104:9), which is recited both ways ... *without any pillars that you see*.' Some have said that *ʿamad* is the collective noun for *ʿimād*, not the plural of *ʿumūd*.

The verse intends to remind its audience of the evidence of God's sole and exclusive lordship over the cosmos. The heavens are raised without pillars upon which they rest that your eyes can see. There is a continuous system with the sun and moon subjugated, running to a specified term. There must be someone who oversees these matters, raising the heavens, organizing the system, subjugating the sun and the moon, managing the affairs of the cosmos, and separating these signs out from one another, in the hope that you will have certainty that one day you will meet your Lord. God Almighty is the one who carries out the aforementioned tasks of raising the heavens, organizing the system, subjugating the sun and the moon, managing the affairs, and separating out the signs. He, exalted be He, is the Lord of all, there is no lord other than Him!

In the passage, *It is Allah who raised the heavens without any pillars that you see*, the raising of the heavens refers to their separation from the earth; a separation that allows them to overshadow the earth by casting their rays, and sending down their rain and lightning onto it, among other things. Thus, they are elevated above the earth without any tangible pillars that humans can perceive to support them. Therefore, humans must realize that the heavens have a raiser, a preserver who prevents them from moving out of place, a holder who prevents them from disappearing from their position.

Indeed, the stability of the heavens in their high position without pillars is no less astonishing than the stability of the earth in its position, as both require Him, the Exalted. They maintain their position by His power and will, through specific causes assigned to them by His permission. Even if the heavens were elevated and supported by erected pillars, this would

not render them without need for God Almighty, or free them from being dependent on His power and His will. All things, in all their states, need Him absolutely with a need that never leaves them, in any situation.

However, while human beings acknowledge the universal law of gravity and submit to the need for all phenomena to have causes, and while their innate nature leads them to search for the causes of things and of contingent beings, when they repeatedly find some events associated with their causes, they no longer wonder at observing them in their state, nor do they investigate it further. When they see heavy bodies falling to the earth, then find a ceiling raised above the earth that does not fall on it, they wonder and investigate it until they find pillars or supports on which the ceiling stands. With this, along with its repetition in their perception, their mind stops investigating every occasion where they observe something elevated that is supported by pillars or supports.

However, when they find something that breaks this familiar routine, such as celestial bodies remaining high above without any pillars to support them, or the flight of birds by the flapping of their wings, then their mind is drawn to investigate the cause of such phenomena, like one who has been awakened from a slumber.

So, when God says, *It is Allah who raised the heavens without any pillars that you see*, He describes the heavens as being *without any pillars that you see*. This does not signify the absolute negation of pillars from the heavens. However, if His statement, *that you see*, is read as a descriptive clarification with no implicit meaning, or to indicate the negation of tangible pillars, this suggests that, since they do not have pillars, it is God, exalted be He, who is the raiser, the holder of them, without the mediation of a cause. If they had pillars like everything else that relies on a pillar, then the pillars would be the raiser, the holder of them, without needing God Almighty, as most people might imagine, namely that the things that depend on God are those things whose cause is unknown, like celestial matters, atmospheric events, the soul, and the like.

The Qur'an affirms, firstly, that everything, apart from God Himself, is created by Him, and all creation and command depends on Him, as He said, *Allah is the creator of all things* (Qur'an 13:16), and also, *Look! All creation and command belong to Him* (7:54).

Secondly, it affirms that the law of causality is constant and that God

is on a straight path. Thus, there is no reason for the law of causality to be applicable to some physical matters and not to others. Some events, such as terrestrial occurrences, are attributed to God through causes, while others, such as celestial matters, are attributed to Him without intermediaries. If a ceiling, for instance, stands on a pillar, it stands due to a cause specific to it, by God's permission. If a celestial body stands without a pillar to support it, it also stands due to a cause specific to it, such as its particular nature or general gravitation, for example, by God's permission.

However, the phrase, *It is Allah who raised the heavens without any pillars that you see*, is meant to awaken people's innermost nature and inspire it to seek the cause of these phenomena, which inevitably leads them to God. This approach is also followed in the subsequent verse, *It is He who has spread out the earth and set in it firm mountains and streams* (13:3), which we will explain below.

Given that the objective in this context—as indicated by the sequence of the verses—is to affirm the oneness of God's Lordship, demonstrate that He is the Lord of all things and that there is no lord besides Him, rather than proving the existence of a creator Creator, God follows the phrase, *It is Allah who raised the heavens without any pillars that you see,* with: *and then presided over the Throne. He disposed the sun and the moon*. This shows that the overall management of the cosmos is unified by the connection some of its parts to others, thereby affirming that the Lord and Master of all, who governs its affairs, is One.

This is because the polytheists, whom the Qur'an addresses in its verses, did not deny that the Creator of everything and its Originator is One, without any partner in His creation and origination of the cosmos. Nor do they deny that this creator is the One God. However, they also believed that He had delegated the management of every affair of the universe and each of its categories of entities, such as the earth, the sky, humans, animals, land, war, peace, life, and death, to a powerful being. Therefore, it is appropriate to worship this powerful being to win its favor and ward off its harm. The only effective refutation of them is to restrict lordship to the One God and affirm that He is the Lord, with no lord besides Him. As for affirming the unity of divinity, in the sense of affirming that the Necessary Being is One, and there is no necessary being other than Him, and to Him all existence leads, this is a matter that the polytheists do not deny and does not affect

their beliefs in any way.

From this, it becomes clear that the phrase, *It is Allah who raised the heavens without any pillars that you see* is placed at the beginning of the verse as a prelude and preparation for His statement, *and then presided over the Throne*, without it being the main focus of the argument to come. The introduction of the verse complements its conclusion, and vice versa, as can also be seen in God's statement, *Indeed your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and then settled on the Throne* (7:54, 10:3), and in other similar verses.

It also becomes clear that the phrase, *without any pillars*, is related to the raising, and *that you can see* is a description of the pillars. The intention is that they are raised without visible, tangible pillars. As for those who read *you can see* as a sentence starting a new thought, suggesting a response to an interjection, as if the listener, upon hearing *It is Allah who raised the heavens without any pillars*, asks, 'What is the evidence for that?' and is answered, *you can see*, the evidence for that is that they are visible to you, this explanation of the verse seems unlikely. Unless the intention of *the heavens* is to refer to the entirety of the upper direction including the celestial bodies of stars and planets, the accumulated air above the earth, and the clouds and mist, all of which are indeed raised without pillars and visible to humans.

The sentence, ... *and then presided over the Throne. He disposed the sun and the moon*, has been discussed previously in the explanation of verse 54 of Sūrah al-Aʿrāf.

His statement, *each moving for a specified term*, means that each of them runs to a specific term at which it stops and does not exceed. This is one reading. However, it is also plausible, and even more likely, that the omitted pronoun refers to all, meaning that all of the heavens, sun, and moon run to a specified term. Indeed, the rule of motion and movement is constantly applicable to all these bodies.

The meaning of the phrase, '*specified term*' has been discussed previously in the explanation of verse 1 of Sūrah al-Anʿām.

His statement, *He directs the command*, refers to the arrangement of things, which is bringing one thing after another. It implies the ordering of multiple diverse things and organizing them by placing each thing in its specific place so that each of them achieves the intended purpose and

benefit, without the situation being disturbed by the disappearance of the original or the corruption and crowding of the parts. For example, one might say: 'He directed the affairs of the house,' meaning he organized its affairs and the actions related to it in a way that led to the improvement of its condition and the increased enjoyment of its benefits by its inhabitants.

From this perspective, it becomes apparent that God's management of the affairs of the universe involves organizing its components in a precise and meticulous manner, so that everything is directed toward its intended purpose, which is the ultimate level of perfection specific to it and the end of the specified term it can reach. The management of everything involves implementing a universal system that directs everything toward its collective goal, which is returning to God and the emergence of the life of the Hereafter following the life of this world.

The passage, *He elaborates the signs that you may be certain of encountering your Lord*, based on the apparent context in which it occurs, refers to the signs found in the cosmos. Thus, elaborating these means distinguishing some from others and separating them after they were joined together. This is part of God's practice of distinguishing things, differentiating everything from everything else, and extracting from everything what is hidden within it and concealed in its depths. Through this, light is separated from darkness, truth from falsehood, good from evil, the righteous from the corrupt, and the rewarded from the punished.

Therefore, He followed it with the phrase, *that you may be certain of encountering your Lord*, as the Day of Meeting is the Hour, which God has also called 'the Day of Separation,' and promised on it to distinguish the pious from the criminals and the wicked therein. He has said, *Indeed the Day of Separation is the tryst for them all* (44:40), and He said, *'Get apart today, you guilty ones!'* (36:59), and He said, *so that Allah may separate the bad ones from the good, and place the bad on one another, and pile them up together, and cast them into hell. It is they who are the losers* (8:37).

The most well-known explanation of this verse among scholars is that the signs it refers to are, in fact, the signs contained in the scriptures revealed by God. Thus, detailing them for a purpose means explaining and revealing them through the statements in the scriptures revealed to God's prophets so that people may reflect, contemplate, and understand them. In this, there is hope that they will have certainty about meeting God Almighty

and returning to Him. However, the meaning we have presented is more consistent with the themes of this chapter and closer to the immediate context of the verse.

Note that in His statement, *that you may be certain of encountering your Lord*, instead of saying 'so that you may be certain of encountering Him,' the explicit noun '*your Lord*' is placed where the implicit pronoun 'Him' would be. The purpose of this is to further emphasize God's Lordship and highlight that the one who created the world and managed its affairs, and in doing so becoming its Lord, is also your Lord. Therefore, there is no lord except one Lord, who has no partner in His lordship.

وَهُوَ الَّذِى مَدَّ الأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِىَ وَأَنْهَارًا وَمِن كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ جَعَلَ فِيهَا زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ يُغْشِى اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ إِنَّ فِى ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٣﴾

(13:3) It is He who has spread out the earth and set in it firm mountains (*rawāsī*) and streams, and of every fruit He has made in it two kinds (*zawjayn ithnayn*). He draws the night's cover over the day. There are indeed signs in that for a people who reflect.

Rawāsī is the plural of *rāsiya*, derived from the verb *rasā*, which means to be fixed and stable. The noun *rāsiya* is used to denote a mountain because of how firmly fixed it is in its place.

Zawj ('pair') is the opposite of *fard*, and is used to refer to a set of two things together and each of them individually. Thus, they are both collectively a *zawj* and they are *zawjayn* at the same time. Sometimes *zawj* is specified with the adjective 'two,' as in, *zawjayn ithnayn* ('two pairs'), to emphasize the indication that the intention is two, not four, as in the present verse.

His statement, *It is He who has spread out the earth*, means that He expanded it in a manner suitable for animals to live on and for crops and trees to grow. What can be said about attributing the spreading out of the earth to God, and having it serve as a preamble for what follows in His statement, *and set in it firm mountains and streams*, is similar to the what can be said on His statement in the previous verse, *It is Allah who raised*

the heavens without any pillars that you see.

His statement, *and set in it firm mountains and streams*, refers back to the earth. The discussion is structured in such a way that some parts of it follow others. The purpose of this, to the best of my knowledge, is to highlight how God has designed the earth to be inhabited by humans and animals, both in their movement to seek sustenance and their rest for comfort. God has spread the earth, and without this, it would not be suitable for the survival of humans and animals. If it had merely been spread flat, without any elevation or depression on its surface, it would not be suitable for the emergence of the water reserves within it onto its surface for the irrigation of crops and orchards. So, God placed firmly set mountains on it and stored within it what descends onto the earth from the water of the sky. He carved rivers from its edges and sprung springs from it onto the plain to water the crops and gardens, thereby producing various kinds of fruits: both sweet and tart, summer and winter, wild and cultivated. He subjected the face of the earth to the cycle of night and day, both of which play a significant role in the maturation of fruits and crops by exposing them to heat and cold, which affect their ripening and growth, and expansion and contraction, and by exposing them to light and darkness, which regulate the movement of creatures and humans, their efforts in seeking sustenance, and their rest for sleep and relaxation.

The outspreading of the earth facilitates the placement of firmly set mountains, which in turn facilitate the carving of rivers, which in turn facilitate the creation of various kinds of fruits. Through the cycle of night and day, God's intended purpose is fulfilled. All of this is interconnected and unified management that points to a uniquely wise manager who has no partner in His Lordship. Indeed, in this there are certainly signs for people who reflect.

His statement, *and of every fruit He has made in it two kinds*, means that from all the possible fruits, He created various kinds on earth, each different from the other, such as summer and winter fruits, sweet and others, moist and dry.

This is the well-known interpretation of *two kinds*, so *two kinds* refers to one kind differing from another kind, whether they are two kinds without a third, or not. This is similar to the instances where the dual is used for repetition, as in God's statement, *Look again, once more* (67:4), which

means to look again and again, no matter how many times that may be.

In *Tafsīr al-jawāhir*, al-Ṭanṭāwī says about the phrase, *two kinds*: 'He created in it all kinds of fruits, male and female, in their flowers when they form. Recent research has revealed that every tree and plant does not produce its fruit and seed except from a male and a female.

The male organ can be with the female organ in one tree, like most trees, or the male organ can be in one tree and the other in another tree, like the date palm. If both organs are in one tree, they can either be together in one flower, or each of them can be in its own flower. The second case is like the gourd, and the first is like the cotton tree, where the male organ and the female organ are in one flower.'

However, while what al-Ṭanṭāwī has said belongs in the category of scientific facts that are beyond dispute, the apparent meaning of the verse under discussion does not support such a reading. The apparent meaning of the verse is that all of the fruits are *of two kinds*, not that they are created from two mates. If that were the intention, it would have been more appropriate to say: 'and from all the fruits, He made in them two mates.'

Of course, there is no problem with inferring this from verses like God's statement, *Immaculate is He who has created all the kinds of what the earth grows* (Qur'an 36:36), and His statement, *We sent down water from the sky and caused every splendid kind to* grow (31:10), and the verse, *In all things We have created various kinds so that you may take admonition* (51:49).

Some commentators on the Qur'an have mentioned that *zawjayn ithnayn* refers to the male and the female, the sweet and the sour, and all other kinds, so the two mates become four individuals: the male and the female, and each of them is different with characteristics that are more than one, like the sweet and others, and the summer and others. This is as you see.

As for the passage, *He draws the night's cover over the day*, this means that God clothes the light of the day with the darkness of the night, so the sky becomes dark after it was illuminated. Some scholars have said that what is meant by it is the covering of each of the night and the day by the other, and the following of the night by the day and the day by the night, but there is no evidence to support this.

He concludes the verse with His statement, *There are indeed signs in that for a people who reflect.* This is because the contemplation of the

systematic order of the earth, its management, the interconnectedness of its parts, and their mutual compatibility, all leading to the ultimate purpose of the whole and each of its constituent parts, reveals a unified, rational order of utmost precision and wisdom. This indicates that the cosmos has a single Lord, with no partner in His Lordship, who is all-knowing, not subject to ignorance, and all-powerful, never overcome in His capability. He is the one who cares for everything, especially humans, guiding them toward their eternal happiness.

وَفِي الأَرْضِ قِطَعٌ مُّتَجَاوِرَاتٌ وَجَنَّاتٌ مِّنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَزَرْعٌ وَنَخِيلٌ صِنْوَانٌ وَغَيْرُ صِنْوَانٍ يُسْقَى بِمَاء وَاحِدٍ وَنُفَضِّلُ بَعْضَهَا عَلَى بَعْضٍ فِي الأُكُلِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٤﴾

(13:4) In the earth are neighboring terrains and vineyards, farms, and date palms growing from the same root (*ṣinwān*) and from diverse roots (*ghayr ṣinwān*), irrigated by the same water, and We give some of them an advantage over others in flavor (*ukul*). There are indeed signs in that for a people who apply reason.

Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī writes: '*Ṣinū* is a runner that comes out from the roots of a tree... one says they are two *sinūs*, or so-and-so is a *ṣinū* of his father. The dual form is *ṣinwān*, and the plural form is also *ṣinwān*. God says, *growing from the same root* (ṣinwān) *and from diverse roots* (ghayr ṣinwān).' He adds: '*Ukul* refers to what is consumed from a tree. God says, *its fruits* (ukul) *are everlasting* (13:35). *Ukla* is similar in meaning to *luqma* (a bite).'

The meaning is that one of the proofs that this cosmic order rests upon the intentional design of a transcendent wise Creator, to whom things submit in their nature and run as He wills and how He wills, is that on the earth are tracts adjacent to each other, close to each other, similar in the nature of their soil. In it are gardens of grapes, and grapes are among the fruits that greatly differ in shape, color, taste, quantity, delicacy, goodness, and other things. In it are crops different in their genus and type, such as wheat, barley, and others. In it are date palms, growing out two or three from a single stem root, meaning similar ones growing on a common root in it, and not growing out two or three from a single stem root, meaning

separate ones. All are watered with one water and some of them are preferred over others in what it has of the desired advantage in something from its characteristics.

Someone might argue that the observed differences we are referring to stem from the inherent nature of each entity, or are due to external factors that influence them, giving each a unique form and color, and distinct characteristics. They might argue that the sciences that study the identification of trees and plants, and describe the nature of their properties in detail, consider each of them to be influenced by factors that interfere in their composition, effects, and properties.

We acknowledge the point, but it raises further questions: What are the causes of these differences in internal and external factors, and why do these causes themselves vary, leading to diverse effects? If a reason for these differences is proposed, we would then inquire about the root cause of that reason's variability. This line of questioning ultimately leads us to a fundamental substance common to all physical entities, characterized by uniformity in its parts. Yet, such a uniform substance cannot account for the observed variations in the natural world. Thus, we arrive at the conclusion that there must be a supreme cause, transcending all other causes. This ultimate cause not only brought the substance of the universe into existence but also manifested it in diverse forms and myriad effects. Essentially, this points to the existence of a singular cause with consciousness and will. The varied phenomena we observe are the results of its diverse wills. Without these variations in will, there would be no distinguishing features between entities.

Every thoughtful person must pay attention to this and not neglect the point that these verses, which attribute differences in creation to differences in God's will, do not deny the law of cause and effect, contrary to what some imagine. God's will is not like our will, a characteristic that is incidental to the essence and therefore the essence changes with changing wills. Rather, these various wills are God's active attribute and are abstracted from the complete causes and reasons of things and their difference does not cause a difference in the essence. This is a brief summary of the matter, which will hopefully be clarified for the reader in the appropriate place.

Since the argument in this verse is based on intellectual premises without which it will remain incomplete, it is addressed to those who reason,

as stated in the verse: *There are indeed signs in that for a people who apply reason.*

From the above, it is evident that attributing the difference in foodstuffs to God, without mentioning any intermediary cause or causes, is like attributing the raising of the sky without visible pillars, the expansion of the earth, and the creation of the mountains and rivers to God by omitting mention of the intermediaries He used for this. The purpose of this is to awaken the innate understanding of the listeners to search for the cause of these differences and ultimately attribute them to God Almighty, the cause of all causes.

Note that there is a subtle shift in this verse from speaking in the third person ('He') to speaking in the first person ('We'), as in the phrase: *and We give some of them an advantage over others in flavor*. The essence of this phrase is to identify the real cause in the briefest explanation. It is as if it is said: 'Some are given an advantage over others in flavor,' and the one who confers this advantage is none other than God Himself. Then, the speaker identifies Himself and shows, by using the majestic "We", that He is the cause that the seekers are searching for and that it is from His presence that this advantage ultimately springs. Then, this conferring of advantage is summarized as: ... *and We give some of them an advantage over others in flavor*. The expression in the first person with the third person implies that there are divine causes beneath God that act by His command and ultimately devolve to Him.

As seen from the preceding discussion, the verse is presented as an argument for the unity of God's Lordship, not for demonstrating the existence of the Creator or establishing the unity of the Divine Essence. In summary, the argument means that the diversity of effects in things, despite their sharing a common origin, reveals that they rely on a cause whose reality lies beyond a shared united nature, and their orderliness points to His will and divine plan. Therefore, the planner for them is God, and He is their Lord, not another lord. So, the reading of the verse by some commentators as an argument for proving the Creator is misplaced.

The verses, as they appear in their context, are aimed at arguing against the polytheists who deny the unity of God's Lordship and affirm the existence of multiple lords. They acknowledge the unity of the necessary being, God, in His essence. So, there's no point in arguing against them

with arguments to establish that this world has a creator. Some have noted this and suggested instead that the verse is intended as an argument against the pre-Islamic Arab atheists who deny the existence of a creator, but this is refuted by the fact that there's no evidence from the context of the verses that supports this claim.

It also appears that the difference between the two arguments—namely the argument contained in the verse: *It is He who has spread out the earth* ... (13:3) and the one contained in the verse: *In the earth are neighboring terrains* ... (13:4)—is that the first one proceeds from the perspective of unity in multiplicity and the connection and continuity evident in the management related to these diverse things, which points to the unity of their Manager. The second one proceeds from the perspective of multiplicity in unity and the difference in effects and properties in things that have a single origin, which reveals that the initiator who brings forth these diverse and scattered effects and properties is a something that exists beyond their natures and a cause above these causes that return to a single origin. He is the Lord of all, and there is no lord save Him.

As for the first argument mentioned before the two arguments quoted above—namely, the argument contained in His saying: *It is Allah who raised the heavens* ... (13:2), it is like one that proceeds from both perspectives. It mentions the management of the cosmos, which implies the unity of the many and the underlying harmony of what appear to be disparate matters, while also invoking the details of the cosmos, which calls attention to the multiplicity that emerges from unity and the separation of aggregates. In short, the argument asserts that the matter of the world, despite its dispersion and separation, is under one system of management, so it has one Lord, who is God. It is He who distinguishes the signs, differentiates everything from everything else, separates the fortunate from the unfortunate, and the truth from falsehood, which is a reference to the Resurrection and Final Judgment. This is why, from both the Lordship and the Resurrection together, he derived the following conclusion: ... *that you may be certain of encountering your Lord* (13:2).

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, al-Khaṭṭāb al-Aʿwar reported via an incomplete chain of narrations from the scholars and jurists of the

Household of Muhammad, who said: '*In the earth are neighboring terrains*—this means that this fertile land is adjacent to this salty land, but it is not part of it—just as one tribe neighbors another tribe without being part of them.'

(2) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, al-Baḥrānī narrates from Ibn Shahrāshūb, from al-Kharkūshi's *Sharaf al-Muṣṭafā*, al-Thaʿlabī's *al-Kashf wa al-Bayān*, and al-Faḍl b. Shādhān's *Amālī* (which provides the precise wording of the tradition in this case), with his chain of narration from Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh, who said: 'I heard the Messenger of God say to Ali: 'People are from various trees, but you and I are from the same tree,' then he recited the verse: *and vineyards, farms, and date palms growing from the same root and from diverse roots, irrigated by the same water*—'Meaning by the Prophet and you!' Al-Naṭanzī reported this in *al-Khasā'is* from Salmān, and in another narration we read: 'I and ʿAlī are from the same tree, and people are all from different trees.'

(3) Al-Baḥrānī writes: 'Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh's tradition is also narrated by al-Ṭabarsī and ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā in *Kashf al-Ghammah*.

Author's comment: It was also narrated in *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, from al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī and Ibn Mardawayh from Jābir, who said: 'I heard the Messenger of God say: 'O ʿAlī! People are from different trees, but you and I, O ʿAlī, are from the same tree,' then the Prophet recited: *and vineyards, farms, and date palms growing from the same root and from diverse roots* (13:4).

(4) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Suyūṭī narrates from al-Tirmidhī—who rated it as good (*ḥasan*)—al-Bazzāz, Ibn al-Mundhir, Abū al-Shaykh, and Ibn Mardawayh from Abū Hurayra from the Prophet, concerning the verse, *and We give some of them an advantage over others in flavor* (13:4): 'Different species of date: Some are sweet and some are sour.'

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Verses 5-6

This refers to some of the statements made by the idolaters in response to the Prophet's call and his divine message. For example, they asked: 'How can a human being be resurrected after dying and being reduced to dust?' They also asked: 'Why does God not send the punishment that he warns us about? When will this promise be fulfilled, if you are indeed truthful?' The response to these is provided in a manner befitting the situation.

وَإِن تَعْجَبْ فَعَجَبٌ قَوْلُهُمْ أَإِذَا كُنَّا تُرَابًا أَإِنَّا لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ أُوْلَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ بِرَبِّهِمْ وَأُولَٰئِكَ الْأَغْلَالُ فِي أَعْنَاقِهِمْ وَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ۝٥

(13:5) If you are to wonder (*wa in taʿjab*), then wonderful is their remark (*fa ʿajabun qawla-hum*), 'When we have become dust, shall we be into a new creation?' They are the ones who defy their Lord; they shall have iron collars (*aghlāl*) around their necks, they shall be the inhabitants of the Fire, and they shall remain in it.

In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī writes: '*ʿAjab* and *taʿajjub* means for the self to be assailed by something whose cause is not known to it. *Ghall* is a collar that is fastened tightly around the neck.'

At the beginning of this chapter of the Qur'an, God emphasized the truthfulness of what He revealed to His Prophet about the knowledge of religion in His Book, suggesting that all the signs of creation point toward it and confirm it. Its core doctrines are monotheism, prophethood, and resurrection. Then He went into detail about how the signs of creation point toward this by invoking three argument, from which He explicitly concluded the oneness of divine lordship and the reality of resurrection, and this entails the truth of prophethood and the revelation, which is its sign. Once this point had been made clear, the way was open to mention the doubts of the disbelievers concerning these three principles. In this verse, He referred to their doubt about the resurrection, and He will

address their doubts and statements about prophethood and monotheism in the following verses.

Their doubt in this regard is reflected in their saying: *'When we have become dust, shall we be into a new creation?'* In a rhetorical twist, God presented this statement as the true source of wonder that is more deserving of astonishment due to the obvious falseness and wrongness of it. There is no reason for a person of sound mind to doubt the resurrection. If a person were to utter it, this would be among the sources of astonishment. So, He said: *If you are to wonder, then wonderful is their remark*...

Therefore, meaning of the sentence, as guided by the omission of what the audience's *wonder* is related to, is: 'If you are to be truly astonished, and undoubtedly you are, because a human being cannot help but be astonished, then this saying of theirs is something to be astonished about.' So, the composition of this sentence alludes to inevitability of being astonished by their saying, because it is such an evidently false statement that no sensible or rational person could accept it.

When they say, *When we have become dust* (turāb)*, shall we be into a new creation?,'* in this context, by *turāb*, they mean what the human body decomposes into after death in the form of dust. At that point, the human being, which, according to them, is the structure of flesh and bone, composed of specific organs and endowed with certain physical abilities, ceases to exist. So, how can creation include something that is non-existent in its origin and have it return as a new creation?

For this doubt of theirs, there are various aspects. God, in His revelation, has responded to each one of them in a manner that suits it and resolves its substance:

One of these aspects is: They deny the possibility that dust can transform into a complete human. The response to this is that it is possible for earthly materials to transform into semen, then the semen into a clot, then the clot into a lump of flesh, then the lump into a complete human body. The occurrence of this after its possibility leaves no doubt about the possibility of dust transforming again into a complete human. God said: *O people! If you are in doubt about the resurrection, We indeed created you from dust, then from a drop of fluid, then from a clinging mass, then from a fleshy tissue, partly formed and partly unformed* (22:5).

Another aspect is: They deny the possibility of something coming into

existence after its non-existence. The response to this is that it is like the first creation, so it is possible just as the first was possible. God said: *He draws comparisons for Us, and forgets his own creation. He says, 'Who shall revive the bones when they have decayed?' Say, 'He will revive them who produced them the first time* (36:78-79).

Another aspect is: They say that the human being ceases to exist upon death, so there is no entity to be clothed in the new creation, and there is no human being after death and passing except in a person's imagination, without any external reality.

God responded to this in His speech by explaining that a human being is not merely a body composed of several physical organs, such that a person ceases to exist in their essence just because their physical composition has broken down. Rather, the real essence of the human being is a higher spirit (*rūḥ*)—or if you prefer, you can say a "soul" (*nafs*)—that is connected to this physical vehicle and uses it to bring about its purposes and goals. With it, the life of the body remains. With it, the human being remains preserved in personality, even as his body changes and alters with the passing of years and the passage of life. Then death is when God takes it from the body and the soul's connection with it is severed. Then, resurrection is when God renews the creation of the body and the soul's attachment to it, and it finds itself standing before God for the Final Judgment.

God says: *They say, 'When we have been lost in the dust, shall we be indeed created anew?' Rather they disbelieve in the encounter with their Lord. Say, 'You will be taken away by the angel of death, who has been charged with you. Then you will be brought back to your Lord'* (32:10-11). He says: You do not disappear into the earth with death, nor do you cease to exist. Rather, the angel entrusted with death takes the matter that is referred to by the term 'you' and 'I,' which are the souls. They remain in his possession and are never lost. Then when you are resurrected, you will be returned to God by virtue of your bodies being reconnected to your souls, and you will still be you.

So, the human being has an eternal life that is not limited to what is in this transient world, and he has a life in another everlasting abode that endures through the everlastingness of God. He will only enjoy in his second life whatever he earns in his first life through faith in God and good deeds. He prepares today for his tomorrow by acquiring the raw materials

of felicity. If he follows the truth and believes in the signs of God, he will be happy in his afterlife and enjoy the honor of nearness and intimacy in a kingdom that neither fades nor perishes. But if he clings to the earth, is engrossed in the material world, and turns away from the reminder that has been sent to him, he will dwell forever in the abode of misery and ruin, and will be shackled with the chains of disappointment and loss in the pit of misfortune and the depth of distance from the divine, and he will be among the companions of the Fire.

And when you know this which we have presented and contemplate it sufficiently, it becomes clear to you that when God says in the present verse, *They are the ones who defy their Lord; they shall have iron collars around their necks, they shall be the inhabitants of the Fire, and they shall remain in it*, this is not merely a threat of punishment for those who say: *When we have become dust, shall we be into a new creation?,*' as it might seem at first glance. Rather, it is the necessary consequence of their belief.

To clarify, the necessary consequence of their belief that when a human being dies and becomes dust, their humanity ceases and their personality is extinguished, is as follows: They believe a human being is nothing more than a physical form that exists in this physical body structure, living a physical life, without having another eternal life after death in which he endures with the everlastingness of God, rejoices in His proximity, and succeeds through pleasing Him. In other words, according to them, the human being's life is limited to this physical existence and does not extend to what is after death and does not last forever. This, in reality, is a denial of the divine world because there a Lord to whom there is no return is meaningless.

The logical corollary of holding such beliefs is that the human being will limit his aspirations to worldly objectives and material goals, without his understanding ascending to what God has set aside in terms of everlasting happiness and majestic dominion. Therefore, he does not strive to attain nearness to God or works in his present day for his tomorrow in the afterlife—like a chained person who is unable to move or strive for the fulfillment of his mission.

Another necessary implication of holding such a belief is that the human being remains in a state of constant misery and perpetual torment, for he has corrupted the raw materials for happiness and blocked his own

path to human flourishing. These three implications are what God referred to in His saying: *They are the ones who defy their Lord*...

So when God says, *They are the ones who defy their Lord*, this is a reference to the first of the three implications, which is the turning away of those who deny the afterlife from the divine world and the everlasting life it contains, and their covering up of what God has set aside from human beings in terms of everlasting bliss and their denial of it.

When God says, *they shall have iron collars around their necks*, this is a reference to the second implication, which is that they cling to the earth, lean toward their base desires, and are bound by the chains of ignorance and the shackles of denial and disbelief. We have already discussed in our commentary on God's saying, *Indeed Allah is not ashamed to draw a parable* (2:26), about whether these Qur'anic expressions are realities or metaphors, so refer back to it for more detail on this question.

And when He says, *they shall be the inhabitants of the Fire, and they shall remain in it*, this is a reference to the third implication of this belief, which is that they shall remain forever in torment and misery.

وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ وَقَدْ خَلَتْ مِن قَبْلِهِمُ الْمَثُلَاتُ
وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُو مَغْفِرَةٍ لِّلنَّاسِ عَلَىٰ ظُلْمِهِمْ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَشَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٦﴾

(13:6) They would press you (*yastaʿjilūna-ka*) for evil (*sayyi'a*) sooner than for good (*ḥasana*), though there have already gone by before them exemplary punishments (*mathulāt*). Indeed your Lord is forgiving to mankind despite their wrongdoing, and indeed your Lord is severe in retribution.

Al-Ṭabrisī writes in *Majmaʿ al-bayān*: '*Istiʿjāl* means to ask someone to hasten a matter (*ṭalab al-taʿjīl*), and to hasten something means to bring it forth before its proper time. *Sayyi'a* denotes a quality that displeases the soul, and its opposite is *ḥasana*, which denotes a quality that pleases the soul. *Mathulāt* refers to punishments, the singular form of this is *mathula*. Others say that the singular is *muthla* and the plural is *muthulāt*, along the same pattern as *ghurfa* ('room') and *ghurufāt*. Other plural forms that have been suggested include *muthlāt* and *muthalāt*.'

In the *Mufradāt*, al-Rāghib says: 'A *mathula* is a calamity that befalls a person which makes an example of him to deter others, such as a kind

of punishment. Its plural is *muthulāt* or *mathulāt*.'

When God says, *They would press you for evil sooner than for good …*, this refers to the disbelievers mentioned in the previous verse. They are said to press for evil before good because they are demanding that God sends down the threatened punishment in order to mock the Prophet instead of asking for God's mercy and compassion. The evidence for this reading is the adverbial phrase, *though there have already gone by before them exemplary punishments*, which refers to the punishments that befell earlier nations and destroyed them utterly.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: 'Those who disbelieve ask you to bring down the divine punishment upon them instead of asking for God's mercy and compassion, after they have heard you warn them of God's punishment, in mockery, even though they are aware of the punishments that fell upon the nations before them who disbelieved in their messengers.' The verse carries with it a tone of amazement.

The passage, *Indeed your Lord is forgiving to mankind despite their wrongdoing, and indeed your Lord is severe in retribution*, represents either a new statement, or an adverbial statement, which explains why their hastening of the punishment is a strange matter. In other words: 'Your Lord is immensely merciful, encompassing people in all their states, even in their wrongdoing. He is also severely wrathful, but His mercy always precedes His wrath. So why do these people turn away from His vast mercy and forgiveness and hasten to ask for His severe punishment? This is indeed a strange thing that they do!'

From the above context, the following becomes clear:

Firstly: That when God refers to Himself as *your Lord*, this is only to indicate that they are polytheists and idolaters who do not take Him as a Lord. Rather, it is the Prophet who takes Him as a Lord out of all of his people.

Secondly: What is meant by forgiveness and punishment here is not solely the forgiveness and punishment that follows death. For the polytheists only hastened the punishment of this world, while the examples that God mentions as having passed before them are only the worldly punishments that fell upon them.

After all, God's mercy and forgiveness are not limited to what comes after a person has died or to the Day of Resurrection, nor are their effects

specific to that. This has been mentioned repeatedly. So, God has the right to extend His forgiveness to whomever He wills, even to the wrongdoer while he is a wrongdoer, and forgive him his wrongdoing if wisdom requires it. And He has the right to punish. God said: '*If You punish them, they are indeed Your creatures; but if You forgive them, You are indeed the All-mighty, the All-wise*' (5:118).

Note that God says He is *forgiving to mankind* rather than saying 'to the believers' or 'to the penitent' or the like thereof. This suggests that if any person turns to His mercy and asks for His forgiveness, He can forgive him. This applies to both the disbeliever and the believer, as well as major and minor sins. However, if a polytheist were to ask Him to forgive his polytheism, he would thereby become a believer and not a polytheist. God does not forgive a polytheist unless he reverts to monotheism. God has said: *Indeed Allah does not forgive that any partner should be ascribed to Him, but He forgives anything besides that to whomever He wishes* (4:48).

Therefore, those who disbelieve should have asked Him—and hastened in doing so—to forgive their idolatry or the sins that stem from their idolatry, by making faith in Him and His Messenger a priority. Or they should have asked Him for health, comfort, wealth, and offspring, even if they were wrongdoers. For, with His vast mercy, He does that even for those who do not believe in Him and do not submit to Him. As for wrongdoing, while the wrongdoer is engaged in it, forgiveness cannot coexist with it. God said: *and Allah does not guide the wrongdoing lot* (62:5).

Thirdly, note that the literal Arabic phrasing of his saying, *your Lord is forgiving …*, is actually 'possessed of forgiveness' (*la dhū maghfira*). This construction appears to be used to avoid implying that forgiveness is active for all wrongdoers while they are in a state of wrongdoing, as if it is to say: 'He has forgiveness for people despite their wrongdoing. Nothing prevents Him from applying this forgiveness when it is beneficial.'

Another meaning can be derived from the sentence, which is that God Almighty has forgiveness for people, with which He can forgive whomever He wills among them. The wrongdoing of people does not necessitate that God becomes angry and abandons the attribute of forgiveness altogether, not forgiving anyone. This would suggest a slightly different reading compared to some of what has been mentioned earlier about the subtleties of the verse, although this would not be apparent from the context.

Theologians from the Muʿtazilī and other Sunnī schools of thought have debated about the scope of the verse. However, we say that it is absolute in its meaning and not qualified or restricted in any way, save for by the verse.

The verse contains debates between the Mu'tazilites and others from the Sunnis. It is absolute and there is no evidence to restrict it except for what is in God's saying: *Indeed Allah does not forgive that any partner should be ascribed to Him* ... (4:48).

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Examining Narrations

(1) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Suyūṭī cites Ibn Jarīr, who narrates from Ibn ʿAbbās regarding the verse, *Indeed your Lord is forgiving to mankind despite their wrongdoing, and indeed your Lord is severe in retribution*, the Prophet said: If it were not for God's leniency and indulgence, no one would enjoy life, and if it were not for His warning and punishment, everyone would become wanton.'

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Verses 7–16

These verses respond to the idolaters' polemical question, *'Why has not some sign been sent down to him from his Lord?'* and refute it by asserting that the Messenger's role is merely to warn, as God has sent him according to the divine modus operandi of guiding humankind toward the truth. This is then elaborated below.

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ لَوْلا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ إِنَّمَا أَنتَ مُنذِرٌ وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ ﴿٧﴾

> (13:7) The faithless say, 'Why has not some sign been sent down to him from his Lord?' You are only a warner, and there is a guide for every people.

This verse is not intended as a repetition of the earlier verse where it says: "*They would press you for evil sooner than for good* ... (13:6) referring to a decisive sign that distinguishes between truth and falsehood, which leads to the nations destruction, as this is not supported by the context. If that were the intention, it would have been more appropriate to say: 'And they say, "Why has not..." etc.

Rather, what is meant is that they are demanding another sign from the Prophet besides the Qur'an that demonstrates the truth of his claim to be a prophet. They belittled the Qur'an, displayed a lack of concern for it, and demanded another miraculous sign, like those given to Moses, Jesus, and others. Their saying: *'Why has not some sign been sent down to him ...?'* was a veiled reference to the Qur'an.

When God says, *You are only a warner, and there is a guide for every people*, it provides the Prophet with an answer. Directing the address to him alone, without instructing him to convey the answer to them, indirectly suggests that they do not merit a response due to their lack of understanding and the absence of the necessary level of intellect and comprehension in them. This is because their demand for a sign is based on their wrongheaded assumption—as many Qur'anic references to this topic indicate—that it

is obligatory for the Messenger to have absolute supernatural power over everything he wants, such that he can produce whatever he wants, and he must produce whatever is demanded of him.

The verses counter their demand: *'Why has not some sign been sent down to him from his Lord?'* by emphasizing that the Messenger is merely a human like them, sent by God to warn them of God's punishment and caution them against arrogantly refusing to worship Him and causing corruption on Earth. This is based on the divine modus operandi that prevails throughout His creation, that He guides everything toward its desired perfection and directs His servants toward what is beneficial for their worldly life and the hereafter.

The Messenger, being a human like them, does not possess harm or benefit, death or life, or resurrection in of himself. His only duty is to convey the message of his Lord. As for signs and miracles, they are up to God to send down as He wills and however He wills. Therefore, demanding that the Messenger produce such signs is pure ignorance.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: 'They demand a sign from you—even though they have the Qur'an, the best sign, right in front of them—and you have nothing to do with that. You are only a guide who guides them through the path of warning. It is God's modus operandi among His servants to send a guide in every community to guide them to the truth.'

The verse indicates that the Earth is never devoid of a guide who leads people to the truth, whether it is a warning prophet or another guide who guides people by God's command. Some related matters were dealt with in our discussions on prophethood and the imāmate earlier in this commentary.

اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَحْمِلُ كُلُّ أُنثَىٰ وَمَا تَغِيضُ الْأَرْحَامُ وَمَا تَزْدَادُ وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ عِندَهُ بِمِقْدَارٍ ﴿٨﴾

(13:8) Allah knows what every female carries, and what the wombs reduce (*mā taʿghīḍu al-arḥām*) and what they increase, and everything is by measure with Him,

In the *Mufradāt*, al-Rāghib says: 'The verb *ghāḍa* means to decrease or to be decreased by something else. God has said: *The waters receded*

(ghīḍ al-mā') (11:44). The verse, *and what the wombs reduce* (mā taʿghīḍu al-arḥām), means what the wombs lose, making it like the water that the earth absorbs. The place where water stands and is absorbed is called a *ghīḍa* and the adjective *ghā'iḍ* refers to a dark night.'

According to this, it makes most sense that the three matters mentioned in the verse—namely *what every female carries*, *what the wombs reduce*, and *what they increase*—refer to three functions of the womb during pregnancy. What every female carries is the fetus that she nurtures and protects. What the wombs reduce is the menstrual blood that is stored in them and which the womb uses to nourish the fetus. What they exceed is the blood that they expel, such as postpartum blood or the spotting sometimes seen during pregnancy, which is evident from some of what was narrated from the Imāms of the Prophet's Household and is sometimes also attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās.

Most commentators believe that what is meant by *what the wombs reduce* is the time that the wombs fall short of the full term of pregnancy, which is nine months, and what is meant by *what they increase* is what goes beyond that.

However, this reading lacks supporting evidence, as reducing' in this sense is a kind of figurative, which would require a contextual clue in the verse. However, no such clue exists.

Some narrate that what is meant by *what the wombs reduce* is what falls short of the minimum term of pregnancy, which is six months, referring to a miscarriage, and *what they increase* refers to what is born at the maximum term of pregnancy. Others suggest that *reduce* refers to a decrease in term and *increase* refers to an increase in it.

The two readings can be refuted in the same manner as the previous one. It has been noted that the most suitable interpretation, in the context of the verse, is that 'reducing' and 'increasing' refer to the decrease and increase in the blood that is discharged into the womb.

As for the passage, *and everything is by measure* (bi-miqdār) *with Him*: The word *miqdār* refers to the limit that defines and distinguishes a thing from others. Every existing thing is necessarily defined in itself and distinguished from others, otherwise, it would not exist at all.

This idea, namely that everything is accompanied by a measure and linked to a limit that it does not exceed, is a Qur'anic truth repeatedly

mentioned in God's words, such as His saying: *Certainly Allah has set a measure for everything* (65:3), and His saying: *There is not a thing but that its sources are with Us, and We do not send it down except in a known measure* (15:21), among other verses.

If a thing is limited by a boundary that it cannot cross, and that limit is set for it by God that it will not overstep, and nothing is hidden from His knowledge, as He said: "*Indeed Allah is witness to all things* (22:17); and: *Look! He indeed comprehends all things!* (41:54); and: *not an atom's weight escapes Him* (Saba: 3), it is impossible for God not to know what every female carries, what the wombs reduce, and what they increase.

Therefore, the end of the present verse, namely *and everything is by measure with Him*, explains the beginning of it, which is *Allah knows what every female carries, and what the wombs reduce and what they increase*. This verse and what follows it serve as a coda to the previous verses that stated that God knows everything, has power over everything, answers those who call on Him, and that everything is subject to Him. Therefore, He is most deserving of Lordship. So, the matter of the signs is up to Him, not you, for you are only a warner.

عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْكَبِيرُ الْمُتَعَالِ ﴿٩﴾

(13:9) the Knower of the sensible and the Unseen, the All-great, the All-sublime.

This verse presents the Unseen (*al-ghayb*) and the sensible (*al-shahāda*) as a pair of relative terms, as we have seen on numerous occasions throughout the Qur'an. Hence, a thing can be unseen in relation to one thing but sensible in relation to another. This is because things, as we have already discussed, are inevitably bound by limits they remain within and cannot overstep. A thing that exists within the boundary of another thing and is not outside of it is considered sensible in relation to it because it is perceivable. By contrast, a thing that exists beyond the boundary of another thing and is not within it is considered unseen in relation to it because the latter cannot perceive it.

Based on this, it becomes apparent that only God Almighty knows the Unseen absolutely. As for the Unseen becoming known to something, it is because knowledge is a form of encompassment, and there is no sense

in a thing encompassing what is outside the bounds of its existence and therefore alien to its comprehension. But God Almighty knows the Unseen because He, the Exalted, is not limited in existence by any boundary, and He encompasses all things, so nothing is screened from Him by a boundary. Therefore, not a single thing is unseen to Him, even if it is posited to be unseen to all others.

The meaning of His knowledge of the sensible and the Unseen essentially devolves to the fact that there is nothing unseen to Him. Rather, both the sensible and the Unseen, which are realized among things by comparing some to others, are both plainly visible to Him. The meaning of the words, *the Knower of the sensible and the Unseen*, is that what can be known by the masters of knowledge, which is what does not go beyond the boundary of their existence, and what they cannot know because it is Unseen, being beyond the boundary of their existence, are both known and visible to Him, the Exalted, due to the fact that He encompasses all things.

This verse invokes the two divine names, *the All-great, the All-sublime* (al-Kabīr al-Mutaʿāl). *Al-Kabīr* is derived from *kubr* ('greatness'), which is the opposite of *ṣughr* ('smallness')—yet another example of relative meanings: When bodies are measured against each other in terms of their varying sizes, whatever contains the size of the other and more is considered great, and what is not like that is considered small. Then people expanded this estimation to non-bodies. What is suitable for His sacred domain, the Exalted, from the meaning of grandeur, is that He, the Exalted, possesses every perfection of a thing and encompasses it, so He, the Exalted, is All-great, meaning He has the perfection of everything that is perfect and even more still.

Meanwhile, *al-Mutaʿāl* is derived from *taʿālī*, which means to reach great heights, as indicated by the verse, *Immaculate is He, and greatly exalted above what they say* (taʿālā ʿammā yaqūlūn ʿuluwwan kabīran) (17:43). In this verse, *ʿuluwwan kabīran* is an absolute object (*mafʿūl muṭlaq*) for the verb *taʿālā* ('to be above'). Therefore, God is high and exalted. As for His being high, it is because He is above everything and dominates it, and highness is domination. As for His being All-sublime, it is because He has the utmost highness, as His highness is greater in comparison to every other kind of highness, so He is the Most High, the Dominant above everything high from every angle.

Therefore, God's saying: *the Knower of the sensible and the Unseen,* can be seen in a new light when followed by His saying: *the All-great, the All-sublime*. The combined implication of the two names is that God Almighty encompasses everything, dominates it, is not dominated by anything, and cannot be overcome by anything in any way. Therefore, He knows the unseen as easily as He knows the sensible, and He is not dominated or overcome by any unseen so that it could be absent from His knowledge, just as He is not dominated by any sensible thing. Thus, He is the Knower of the unseen and the sensible because He is great and sublime.

سَوَاء مِّنكُم مَّنْ أَسَرَّ الْقَوْلَ وَمَن جَهَرَ بِهِ وَمَنْ هُوَ مُسْتَخْفٍ بِاللَّيْلِ وَسَارِبٌ بِالنَّهَارِ ﴿١٠﴾

(13:10) It is the same whether any of you speaks secretly, or does so loudly, or whether he lurks in the night, or is open to view in daytime (*sāribun bi al-nahār*).

The root *sarab* or *surūb* means to go downhill, for tears to flow, or to follow any path. Therefore, the *sārib* is one who follows a path and announces to others that he is doing so.

This verse can be read as following logically from the previous one. In other words, if God Almighty knows the unseen and the sensible equally, then it is the same whether you conceal your speech or declare it. God knows and hears their speech and their conversations, without the secrets of those who conceal their speech being hidden from Him. It is also the same whether you hide by night, taking advantage of the darkness and the cover it provides to hide yourself from the eyes of observers, or whether you go forth by day, openly traveling your path without hiding yourself. God knows about both equally well, without the one using the night to conceal his plotting being hidden from Him.

لَهُ مُعَقِّبَاتٌ مِّن بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ يَحْفَظُونَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لاَ يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُواْ مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوءًا فَلاَ مَرَدَّ لَهُ وَمَا لَهُم مِّن دُونِهِ مِن وَالٍ ﴿١١﴾

(13:11) He has guardian angels (*mu'aqqibāt*), to his front and his

> rear, who guard him by Allah's command. Indeed Allah does not change a people's lot, unless they change what is in their souls. And when Allah wishes to visit ill on a people, there is nothing that can avert it, and they have no protector besides Him.

It appears that the four pronouns—*He has ... to his front ... his rear ... guard him*—all refer back to the same thing. There is no suitable referent for all of them except what is in the previous verse, meaning the relative pronoun in His saying: *It is the same whether any of you* (min-kum man) *speaks secretly*. This human being, who God knows in all of his states, is the one who has guardian angels before and behind him. *Muʿaqqibāt* is derived from the verb *taʿqīb*, which means to follow something or come from behind it (*al-ityān min ʿaqabi-hi*). Therefore, when God says that these *muʿaqqibāt* are coming *to his front and his rear* only makes sense if, as this person is traveling on a path, these angels are circulating around him. Indeed, God has often compared the human being's condition in this world to that of a traveler on a journey, saying things like: *O man! You are laboring toward your Lord laboriously, and you will encounter Him* (84:6), and in the same vein are the verses describing his eventual return to his Lord, such as His saying: *... to whom you shall be brought back* (36:83), *... and to Him you will be returned* (29:21). So, the human being, while he is traveling to his Lord, has angels who watch over him from in front of and behind him.

Based on this, it becomes clear that a human being is not just this physical body and material form, but rather, a being composed of a soul and a body. The main aspect to which all matters refer is the soul. It is the soul that feels and desires, to which commands and prohibitions are directed, and upon which reward and punishment, comfort and pain, happiness and misery are based. It is from the soul that good and bad deeds originate, and to it are attributed the states of faith and disbelief. The body is like a tool that it uses to achieve its aims and purposes.

With this understanding in mind, the meaning of what is in front of and behind a human being expands to include all physical and spiritual matters. All physical bodies and material entities that surround the human body throughout his life, some are in front of him and some are behind him. Similarly, all the psychological stages a human being goes through on his journey to God, and the spiritual states he experiences, such as closeness

and distance, happiness and misery, good and bad deeds, and what has been stored for him of reward and punishment, all of these are either behind him or before him. These *muʿaqqibāt* that God has mentioned in the verse play a role in all of this, inasmuch as they are related to the human being.

The human being, whom God described as not possessing for himself harm or benefit, nor death nor life nor resurrection, is unable to protect anything of himself, nor the effects of himself on the world, whether these are with him or not. Rather, it is God who protects them for him. God said: *Allah is watchful over them* (42:6), and He said: *and your Lord is watchful over all things* (34:21), and He said, mentioning His intermediaries in this matter: *Indeed, there are over you watchers* (82:10).

If God did not protect him through these means, which He sometimes refers to as *ḥafiẓīn* ('watchers') and other times as *muʿaqqibāt* ('guardian angels'), ruin would encompass him from all sides, and destruction would hasten to him from in front of and behind him. However, just as he is protected by the command of God, his annihilation, destruction, and corruption are by the command of God, because all dominion belongs to God; there is no one who manages a person's affairs, nor dispose them except Him. This is what the Qur'an's teachings point to, and the verses in these meanings are so numerous as to obviate the need to list them.

The angels also only do what they do by His command. God said *He sends down the angels with the Spirit of His command* (16:2), and He said: *They do not venture to speak ahead of Him, and they act by His command* (21:27).

From this, it becomes clear that these guardian angels, just as they guard what they guard by God's command, so too do they guard it from God's command. For the aspect of annihilation and destruction, and loss and corruption only occurs by God's command, just as the aspect of endurance, permanence, and safety only occurs by God's command. No physical structure persists except by God's command, just as no structure disintegrates except by God's command. No spiritual state or action or effect of an action is established except by a command from God, just as it is neither nullified nor made to vanish except by a command from God. So, all matters belong to God and to Him all matters return.

Based on this, these guardian angels, just as they guard a person by God's command, so too they guard him from God's command. Thus, it

is appropriate to understand His saying in the verse under discussion as: 'They guard him from God's command.'

Based on the above, the connection of this with God's saying, *Indeed Allah does not change a people's lot, unless they change what is in their souls*, becomes clear. This latter passage serves as a rationale for the earlier one: *who guard him by Allah's command*. The meaning is that God, the Exalted, only made these guardian angels and assigned them to the human being to protect him by His command from His command and prevent him from being destroyed or changed in any aspect of his state because His modus operandi has always been that He does not change the condition of a people until they change what is in their own selves in terms of spiritual states, such as changing gratitude to ingratitude, obedience to disobedience, and faith to polytheism. Then, and only then, God changes the blessing to a curse, guidance to misguidance, and happiness to misery, and so on.

Therefore, the passage, *Indeed Allah does not change a people's lot ...*, indicates in a general sense that God has decreed a certain kind of correlation between the blessings bestowed by Him upon the human being and the spiritual states of the human being, which are in line with his innate upright nature (*fiṭra*). If a people were to follow this upright nature, believe in God, and do good deeds, He would follow this by pouring out the blessings of this world and the Hereafter upon them, as He said: *If the people of the towns had been faithful and Godwary, We would have opened to them blessings from the heaven and the earth. But they denied; so We seized them because of what they used to earn* (7:96). Their state of being blessed is stable and fixed upon them so long as they remain in their own state of uprightness in themselves. However, when they change their spiritual state from this, God changes their external state by changing the blessing into a curse.

One might also attempt to derive a universal truth from the verse, namely that there is a kind of correlation between the states of the human soul and the external conditions which the human being inhabits, whether that be on the side of good or of evil. If the people were on faith and obedience and gratitude for the blessing, God would encompass them with His apparent and hidden blessings, and that would continue to be the case until they change themselves; then, if they disbelieved and disobeyed Him, God would change His blessings into curses, and this would continue to be the case until they change; then, if they believed, obeyed, and showed

gratitude toward God, He would change His curse into a blessing, and so on. This is the reality of the matter.

However, the context of the verse does not support such a reading, especially the subsequent portion of it, *And when Allah wishes to visit ill on a people, there is nothing that can avert it*. This clarifies the meaning of the previous parts of the verse, namely that when He is describing changing *a people's lot*, He means changing it from good to bad. Therefore, the original meaning of *a people's lot* is that they were in a good state.

God Almighty says: *Whatever affliction that may visit you is because of what your hands have earned, and He excuses many* (42:30). He mentions that He pardons many sins and erases their effects, so there is no correlation between human actions and conditions and external effects in terms of evil, unlike in terms of good, as God Almighty says in the counterpart verse: *That is because Allah never changes a blessing that He has bestowed on a people unless they change what is in their own souls* (8:53).

When God says, *And when Allah wishes to visit ill on a people, there is nothing that can avert it*, he does not mention this because it is His primary concern but because this relates to the guardian angels that protect a person. So, He mentioned that everything with Him is measured and that every human has guardian angels who protect them by His command and they do not leave him to perish or change or become disturbed in his existence and or in the blessings given to him by God. People remain in their state that God has bestowed on them and this state does not change until they change what is within themselves. It was necessary to mention that this change from happiness to misery and from blessing to calamity is also one of the determined matters that no one can prevent from being realized. The matter is up to God and no on besides Him has any say in it. Therefore, it is evident that people have no escape from the judgment of God in aspects of both good and evil, and they are taken over by it and in His grip.

Therefore, the meaning of this part of the verse is: 'And when God wills ill for a people—and He does not will that except when they change what is in themselves and forsake the traits of divine servanthood and disregard the dictates of human nature—there is no repelling that ill, whether it takes the form of misery, calamity, or punishment.'

Then His saying, ... *and they have no protector besides Him* is an

explanatory addendum to His saying, *And when Allah wishes to visit ill on a people, there is nothing that can avert it*, as it conveys the reason for this. After all, if they have no protector to look after their affairs other than God Almighty, then there is no one to repel whatever ill God intends for them.

Based on the above, and the general tone and context of the verse, it is clear that everyone, in whatever state they are, is accompanied in their journey toward God by guardians who are in front and behind them, in their present and their past. They are preserved by God's command from any change in their state that would lead to their destruction, corruption, or misery by virtue of another command from God. This other command that changes their state only takes effect if people change what is within themselves. At that point, God changes their blessings to calamities and intends ill for them. If God intends ill for a people, there is no repelling it because they have no guardian to manage their affairs apart from Him, so there is none who can repel whatever ill God intends for them

This makes several matters clear:

Firstly, that the verse represents a detailed explanation of what is mentioned in the previous verses, including His saying, ... *and everything is by measure with Him* (13:8). Indeed, it indicates that things have set limits with God that they do not transgress or fall short of such that this would remove them from His knowledge. This verse details the statement regarding humans having guardians in front of and behind them, charged with their care by God's command, preserving them and all that relates to them from destruction or change from their present state, and they are not destroyed or changed except by virtue of another command from God.

Secondly, that there is no part of a human being, whether their soul, body, characteristics, conditions, deeds, and effects in this world except that an angel is entrusted to preserve it, and this continues in their journey to God until a change occurs within themselves. Verily, God, Glorious is He, is the Watcher, and He has watching angels over them, and this is a reality expounded by the Qur'an.

Thirdly, that there is another matter that lies in wait for people to change what is with them. God, Glorious is He, has mentioned about the effect of this matter when people change what is within themselves, at which point God changes what blessings they have with this matter that lies in wait for them, and from its effective sources is the coming of the named

term, which neither alters nor is delayed. He, the Exalted, says, *We did not create the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them except with reason and for a specified term* (46:3), and He says, *when Allah's appointed time comes, it cannot be deferred* (Qur'an 71:4).

Fourth, that the command of God Almighty is always dominant, prevailing over all aspects of things in any state, and that everything, in both its stability and in its change, is obedient to His command, submissive to His majesty. The Divine command, even though it differs in comparison from one thing to another, is divided into a preserving command and a changing command within a single unified system that does not change. He, the Exalted, says, *Indeed my Lord is on a straight path* (11:56), and He says, *All His command, when He wills something, is to say to it 'Be,' and it is. So immaculate is He in whose hand is the dominion of all things and to whom you shall be brought back* (36:82-83).

Fifth, that it is a part of the inevitable divine decree and the divine modus operandi that there is a correlation between benevolence, piety, and gratitude in every nation, and the influx of apparent and hidden blessings and their descent from God to that nation. These blessings remain and linger among them as long as they do not depart from these virtuous qualities, as indicated by His saying, *If the people of the towns had been faithful and Godwary, We would have opened to them blessings from the heaven and the earth. But they denied; so We seized them because of what they used to earn* (7:96); His saying, *And when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely enhance you (in blessing), but if you are ungrateful, My punishment is indeed severe* (14:7), and His saying, *Is the requital of goodness anything but goodness?* (55:60).

This is what is apparent from the verse's meaning regarding the correlation between the prevalence of righteousness of a people and the continuous outpouring of divine blessings upon them. As for the prevalence of corruption among them or its appearance from some of them and the descent of God's wrath upon them, the verse is silent about the correlation between the two. The most that it does it to hint at this, by saying: *Indeed Allah does not change a people's lot, unless they change what is in their souls*. In other words, it permits that God will change their circumstances when they change as a possibility not a matter of necessity and actuality. That is why the tone of the verse shifts when He says, *And when Allah wishes to*

visit ill on a people, there is nothing that can avert it. He does not say, for example, 'Then Allah will wish to visit ill upon them, and nothing can avert this.'

This reading of the verse is supported by His saying, *Whatever affliction that may visit you is because of what your hands have earned, and He excuses many* (42:30), which clearly indicates that some of this change of outward circumstances is warded off by God's forgiveness.

This is all at the level of the community. As for the level of the individual, the divine speech draws a correlation between the righteousness of his behavior and the spiritual blessings he receives, and that these will change when he changes his behavior. However, it does not draw any connection between his righteousness and his prosperity or physical blessings.

The wisdom in all this is apparent, for the correlation we are discussing is a logical corollary of the principle of harmony between the parts of the cosmic order and the teleological principle, that God is directing all things toward their ultimate goals. God has appointed for each species a goal and endowed them with whatever they need to reach it. Then, God instituted harmony between the different parts of this cosmic order, making the whole a single thing with no opposition or contradiction between its constituent parts. The logical corollary of their differing natures is for each species to live in a state of wellbeing, comfort, and dignity until it reaches its end. If humankind does not deviate from the dictates of human nature—and no other species appears to deviate from its nature in the way that humans can—then the universe continues in a state of felicity and divine blessings and does not stray from its intended trajectory. On the other hand, if the human species deviates from its path and corruption prevails among its members, then the harmony and balance that exists between the parts of the universe is likewise corrupted, which leads it to be deprived of divine blessings, for the natural course of life to be disrupted, and for corruption to appear on land and sea because of what the hands of people have earned. So that God makes them taste some of what they have done, in order that perhaps they will return.[1]

This idea, as should be clear, applies to the species as a whole rather than individual people. Therefore, the correlation between the righteousness

1 See verse 30:41 (Ed.)

of the species and the general blessings bestowed upon them does not apply to individuals because the intended goals of individuals might be nullified but not that of the species as a whole. This is because to nullify the divine goal intended of an entire species logically renders the creation of the universe a pointless act. As the Almighty says, *We did not create the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them for play* (44:38). We have already touched on this topic in our discussion of human deeds in the second part of this commentary.

From the above, the wrongfulness of various objections to this verse becomes apparent as, on its face, it indicates that God's blessings for a people will not change until they change themselves by sinning, even though this is contrary to what the law has established regarding the impossibility of taking the general public to account for the sins of the specific. This is entirely foreign to the purport of the verse.

These are some of the points that arise out of contemplating the meaning of the verse. However, severe disagreements exist between the commentators on its explanation from various aspects:

One is their disagreement on who the pronoun refers to in His saying, *He has guardian angels*... Some say the pronoun refers to 'any of you' in the previous verse, *any of you speaks secretly*, as we have already explained.

Others say it refers to God, in which case it means: 'God has guardian angels, in front of and behind a human, who protect him from harm.' The problem with this reading is that it requires us for to read similar pronouns as having different referents. It also requires a transition in address in his *by Allah's command* for no apparent reason.

Others still argue that the pronoun refers to the Prophet and the verse is describing the angels who protect him personally. However the problem with this reading, like the previous one, is that it necessitates a seemingly arbitrary change in pronouns, which runs contrary to the apparent meaning of the verse. This is because it also means that the verse becomes disconnected from its predecessors as the Prophet has not been mentioned immediately before it.

Yet others say the pronoun returns to the one *open to view in daytime*. And this is the most absurd of readings, which we will return to shortly.

Another point of disagreement among commentators concerns the meaning of *muʿaqqibāt* (translated as 'guardian angels' in the verse). Some

say that it is actually a contraction of *muʿtaqibāt*, in the sense of either to detain or cooperate with one another, although it is reported that this is an error. Others have said it is derived from *taʿqīb* in the sense of one person following another as he walks, as if they are tracing his footsteps. Still others say that the *muʿaqqibāt* are the angels that accompany a person on his journey toward God and remain with him in order to protect him, which is what we have already said. Yet others have said that *muʿaqqibāt* refers to the angels that come to record a person's deeds by night and by day, one after another, so that the angels of the night are followed by the angels of the day, who are in turn followed by the angels of the night, and these successive angels preserve a record of a person's deeds.

Some have argued that *muʿaqqibāt* refer to the bodyguards, escorts, and retinues that accompany kings and rulers. Therefore, the meaning is: 'He who is open to view in daytime (*sāribun bi al-nahār*) (lit. 'he who walks by day')—meaning the rulers and kings—are accompanied by guards and escorts, who surround them in order to protect them from God's command—meaning His determination and decree—imagining that they are capable of such a thing.' However, this reading is among the most foolish examples of playing with the words of God.

Another example of their disagreement about this verse can be seen in regard to His saying: *to his front and his rear*. Some say that this pertains to the *muʿaqqibāt*, meaning they follow him (*yuʿaqqibūna-hu*) from in front of and behind him. However, the problem with this reading is that one can only follow a person from behind them.

Another reading of this phrase is that it actually pertains to the verb *who guard him* (yaḥfaẓūna-hu), meaning that they protect him from in front and from behind by God's command. However, there is an absence of evidence for that in the verse, as this requires the phrase to qualify the verb that comes after it, when, in reality, it should be the other way around.

Others have said it pertains to an implicit meaning in the verse, such as 'surrounding him *from in front and behind*.' And we have already discussed this above.

From another angle, some say that what is meant by what is in front of and behind him is the direction of place, meaning they surround him from in front of him and behind him, they protect him from danger and calamity.

Others say that what is meant by them is what precedes from his actions and what is kept back, the guardian angels keep preserve it and record it.

However, there is no evidence for either of these views.

Some others have said that what is meant by what is in front of and behind him is what pertains to the human being of physical and spiritual matters of what he has in his present state and what is beyond him. And this is the view that we have put forward.

As for the phrase, *who guard him*, some say that it means 'they watch over him,' others say 'it is any kind of guarding (*ḥifẓ*),' and others still say that it is specifically protection from harm.

As for the phrase, *by Allah's command*, some say it is connected to *muʿaqqibāt* (i.e. 'those who accompany him by Allah's command') and that the phrases *to his front and rear*, *who guard him*, and *by Allah's command* are all adjectives of *muʿaqqibāt*. However, this runs contrary to the apparent meaning of the verse.

Others say that *by Allah's command* (min amr Allāh) is connected to the phrase, *who guard him* and that the preposition *min* is used in the sense of *bi*, signifying causality and accompaniment (reflected in the translation here). It means that they protect him because of God's command or with God's command.

Others still have said that *by Allah's command* is related to *who guard him*, but that the preposition *min* is used in the sense of 'originating' or 'beginning,' meaning that they protect him beginning with the command of God.

Still others say the same but that *min* is being used in the sense of *ʿan* ('from' or 'against'), meaning they protect him from being overtaken and overwhelmed by God's command. They explain this by saying that *amr* here is being used in the sense of *baʾs* ('violence,' 'power'), so they protect him from God's punishment by asking God to grant him respite whenever he sins and pleading with God to delay his chastisement of him or to put off his immiseration because he might yet repent and return to the right path. The wrongness of most of these explanations is self-evident and requires no further explanation.

As for the referent of the full phrase, *He has guardian angels, to his front and his rear, who guard him by Allah's command*, some say that it is connected to 'the one who *is open to view in daytime*' (13:10), which we

have already explained.

Others say that it is connected to the phrase, *Allah knows what every female carries* (13:8), or that it is connected to the phrase, *the Knower of the sensible and the Unseen* (13:9). In other words, as surely as He knows them, He appoints guardian angels over them to protect them.

Some have said it is connected to the phrase, *You are only a warner* (13:7), meaning that God appoints these angels to watch over the Prophet specifically.

However, the truth of the matter is that this phrase is connected to His saying, *and everything is by measure with Him* (13:8), and is a kind of exposition of it, as we have already discussed.

There is also disagreement about what the phrase, *Indeed Allah does not change a people's lot* ..., refers to. Some say it is linked to the phrase, *They would press you for evil sooner than for good*, meaning that punishment does not descend on any except those who He knows have changed, and if God knows that there are still those who will believe in God among them or even that some of their descendants who are yet to be born will live in faith, His punishment will not descend on them.

Another view links it to the phrase *or is open to view in daytime*, meaning that when they openly commit sins, they lose their trait of divine servanthood, their divine protection is lost, and punishment descends upon them as a result. However, both opinions, as you can clearly see, do not correlate with the context of the verse. The truth is that his saying: "*Indeed Allah does not change a people's lot* ..., is an exposition of His previous saying: "*who guard him by Allah's command*, as we have already discussed previously.

هُوَ الَّذِی یُرِیكُمُ الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَیُنْشِئُ السَّحَابَ الثِّقَالَ ﴿١٢﴾

(13:12) It is He who shows you (*yurī-kum*) the lightning, inspiring fear and hope, and He produces the clouds (*saḥāb*) that are laden.

The term *saḥāb* is the plural of *sāhāba*, which is why it is qualified with the broken plural adjective *thiqāl*.

The verb *yurī*, from *irā'* ('to show') refers to making visible what can be sensed by sight so that an observer can see it, or to making a person

capable of seeing and observing in of himself. The contrast between His saying, '*He who shows you …*,' and His saying: *'He produces …,*' suggests that the first meaning is the one intended here.

The phrase, *inspiring fear and hope*, is a purposive object (*maf'ūl la-hu*), meaning 'in order to cause you to experience fear and hope.' These could also be read as two verbal nouns being used in the meaning of active participles, both of which are being used adverbially here to qualify the object of the verb *yurī-kum*, meaning: 'He shows you, while you are filled with fear and hope …'

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: 'God is the One who makes lightning appear to your eyes that there might manifest within you the feelings of fear and hope. For the traveler fears the lightning while the resident aspires for it, the people of the sea are afraid of it, and people of the land hope for it; or people are in fear thunderbolts, and hope for its rain. And He is the one who creates clouds and sends them forth while they are laden with rainwater.' The fact that this verse associates the divine sign of lightning with showing and the divine sign of clouds with generation is a mark of its subtle eloquence.

وَيُسَبِّحُ الرَّعْدُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ مِنْ خِيفَتِهِ وَيُرْسِلُ الصَّوَاعِقَ فَيُصِيبُ بِهَا مَن يَشَاءُ وَهُمْ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي اللَّهِ وَهُوَ شَدِيدُ الْمِحَالِ ﴿١٣﴾

(13:13) The Thunder celebrates His praise, and the angels, in awe of Him, and He releases the thunderbolts (*ṣawāi'q*) and strikes with them whomever He wishes. Yet they dispute concerning Allah (*yujādilūn fī Allāh*), though He is great in might (*shadīd al-maḥāl*).

The term *ṣawā'iq* ('thunderbolts') is the plural of *ṣā'iqa*, which refers to the superheated bolts of energy that descend from the heavens and cause thunder.

Jidāl, from whence the verb *yujādilūn* is derived, means to argue verbally in such a way that each side is attempting to overcome the other. Its root meaning is *jadalat al-ḥabl*, meaning 'to tighten the rope.'

Meanwhile, *miḥāl* is derived from the Form III verb *māḥala-hu / yumāḥila-hu*, which means to vie with someone in strength or seek to beguile them. Therefore, when God says, *Yet they dispute concerning Allah,*

though He is great in might, this means that the idolaters, to whom the speech presenting these arguments is directed, dispute God's lordship by fabricating arguments about the lordship of their own gods, clinging tightly to the traditions of their forefathers. Yet, God Almighty is as strong in argumentation as He is knowledgeable of their deficiencies, hence He is extremely capable of exposing and humiliating them.

لَهُ دَعْوَةُ الْحَقِّ وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِهِ لاَ يَسْتَجِيبُونَ لَهُم بِشَيْءٍ إِلاَّ كَبَاسِطِ كَفَّيْهِ إِلَى الْمَاء لِيَبْلُغَ فَاهُ وَمَا هُوَ بِبَالِغِهِ وَمَا دُعَاء الْكَافِرِينَ إِلاَّ فِي ضَلالٍ ﴿١٤﴾

(13:14) To Him belongs the true invocation (*da'wat al-ḥaqq*); and those whom they invoke besides Him do not answer them (*lā yastajībūn la-hum*) in any wise—unless like someone who stretches his hands toward water that it should reach his mouth, but it does not reach it—and the invocations of the faithless only go awry.

Du'ā' and *da'wa* ('invocation,' 'call') refer to efforts to direct the attention of the one being called upon to the one doing the calling, mostly in the form of either speech or gestures. *Istijāba* (from whence *yastajībūn* derives) and its cognate *ijāba* denote the one called upon turning toward the one doing the calling as a result of their call. As for whether the call includes asking for one's needs or whether responding to the call entails meeting those needs, neither of these acts are inherently associated with either act.

Indeed, an invocation is only a true invocation if the one being called has attention that can be directed to the caller and has the earnestness and capability with which to respond to it. As for calling on someone who does not understand, or understands but does not possess what is needed to meet the caller's needs, this is not a true call, even if it takes the appearance of one.

Since the verse affirms the contrast between His saying *To Him belongs the true invocation* and His saying *and those whom they invoke besides Him* ..., which states that the call made to others is devoid of any response and then describes the call of the disbelievers as being in error, we learn from this that what is meant by His saying *the true invocation* is the true and

not the false one. It is the call that the one being called upon hears and certainly responds to, and this is one of God's attributes. He hears the call, is nearmost, and responds. He is the Rich, the Merciful. He said: *I answer the supplicant's call when he calls Me* (2:186) and He has said: *'Call Me, and I will answer you!'* (40:60). Note that in all of these instances, He said that he will respond without setting any condition for doing so other than the invocation or call being made is genuine and that the call is directed to Him alone and no others.

In Arabic the phrase, *the true invocation* literally reads 'the invocation of truth' (*da'wat al-ḥaqq*), which is a possessive construct (*iḍāfa*). This could be used in an adjectival sense, whereby the adjective 'possesses' its noun. Alternatively, it could be a literal possessive relation, in which there are invocations of truth and invocations of falsehood, and the latter invocations are those that do not achieve the goal of obtaining a response, such as those invocations directed toward beings who cannot hear or respond.

In the previous verses, God mentioned that He knows everything and has absolute power. In the present verse, He says that He possesses the reality of both invocation and response. He is the responder to the call, as He is knowledgeable and capable. This is mentioned in the verse by way of affirmation and negation, by which I mean he affirms the true invocation for Himself and denies it for others.

As for the first possibility, consider the phrase *To Him belongs the true invocation*, the fact that the adverbial construct (*ẓarf*) of '*To Him*' is placed at the beginning of the sentence conveys a meaning of exclusivity (namely, 'To him alone belongs the true invocation'). This is supported by the fact that what follows in this verse then negates this from all others.

As for the second, consider *and those whom they invoke besides Him do not answer them in any wise—like someone who stretches his hands toward water that it should reach his mouth, but it does not reach it*, in which God informs the audience in it that those whom the polytheists call on besides Him do not respond to them at all. This has been clarified in numerous places throughout the Qur'an, for these ones they call upon are either the actual physical idols upon which the masses call—and they are inanimate objects with no consciousness or will of their own—or they are the spirits these idols are believed to represent, such as the angels or jinn, spiritual beings of stars and humans, as their elite might conceive of them. However,

these do not possess any harm or benefit for themselves, nor death, nor life, nor resurrection. So how about others, and to God belongs all the kingdom, and to Him belongs all the power, so there is no hope with anyone else, Exalted be He.

Then, from this general denial of the possibility of receiving a response from these idols, God draws a single exception, which is similar to the image struck by the verse: *unless like someone who stretches his hands toward water that it should reach his mouth, but it does not reach it*.

Indeed, the thirsty human, when he wants to drink water, has to get close to the water, then extend his hand to scoop it, take it, reach his mouth, and quench his thirst. This is the essence of seeking something, for it conveys a person to his goal in guidance and righteousness. As for the thirsty person who is distant from water, he wants to drink, but he does not do anything to accomplish this other than extending his hand toward it to reach his mouth. In such a case, he will surely never taste a single drop of the water. Therefore, he has nothing but the appearance of seeking it.

This is the similitude drawn for those who call on beings other than God—they are like this one extending his hand to the water to reach his mouth: They have nothing of invocation except its empty form, like a name without a referent. The ones they call on besides God do not respond to them at all and they do not fulfill their needs, except in the same way that water quenches the thirst of someone who reaches toward it from far away—in other words, they achieve nothing but the appearance of invoking God, just as the one who extends his hands toward water while being far away from it does not actually obtain any water to quench his thirst.

Based on this, we can understand that this exception, *unless like someone who stretches his hands toward water that it should reach his mouth, but it does not reach it*, does not actually negate the generality of denial in the case of the excluded category but only invokes the form of the exception for the reader. On the contrary, it reinforces the meaning of the category from which it is supposed to be excluded. This is because it conveys that those who invoke other than God will not have their prayers answered, just as the one who outstretches his hands toward water will not be responded to. In other words, they will achieve nothing from their supplications; they will attain absolutely nothing.

This is one of the subtleties of God the Exalted's speech, and it is alike

to the subsequent verse: *Have you then taken others besides Him for guardians, who have no control over their own benefit or harm?'* (13:16) And the latter verse is even firmer, as we shall discuss.

From the above, the following becomes clear:

First, when God says, *the true invocation*, He is referring to a real invocation, which is one that is answered and never rejected. As for those who say it refers to the profession of faith, namely the attestation that there is no god but God, there is no evidence for this reading from the context of the verse.

Second, that the implicit meaning of His saying, *and those whom they invoke besides Him do not answer them in any wise*, is: 'As for those whom the idol worshippers invoke besides God, those invoked do not respond to the idolaters with anything.'

Third, that the exception to His saying, *do not answer them in any wise*, namely, *unless like someone who stretches his hands toward water that it should reach his mouth, but it does not reach it*, is presented succinctly. Its full meaning is: 'They do not respond to them with anything and do not grant them anything except like one who stretches out his hands toward water to bring it to his mouth to drink from it.' Perhaps the idea of receiving something is latent in the verb 'to answer' (*istijāba*).

Then God emphasizes this statement by saying, *and the invocations of the faithless only go awry.* This passage highlights another fundamental truth, namely that there is no goal for invocations except God, for He is the All-knowing, the All-powerful, the Utterly Needless, and the Lord of Mercy, and there is no way to Him except by turning toward Him. So, whoever calls on someone other than Him and makes it the object of His invocations has certainly lost His way to God and let His invocations go astray thereby. This is because going astray (*ḍalāl*) literally means to stray from the path toward God and take a route that will not bring you to your intended destination.

وَلِلَّهِ يَسْجُدُ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا وَظِلَالُهُم بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ ﴿١٥﴾

(13:15) To Allah prostrates (*yasjud*) whoever there is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly (*taw'an wa karhan*),

and their shadows at sunrise and sunset (*bi al-ghuduww wa al-āṣāl*).

Sujūd, from whence is derived *yasjud*, refers to lowering oneself onto the ground by placing one's forehead or chin upon it. For example, God says: *and they fell down prostrate before him* (wa kharrū la-hu sujjadan) (12:100). And elsewhere, He says: *fall down in prostration on their faces* (*yakhirrūn li al-adhqān sujjadan*) (17:107), and the singular form of *sujjad* is *sajda*.

Karh / kurh refers to an action that a person performs with difficulty; when he is compelled to perform the action by external factors, it is called *karh*, and when he is compelled by internal factors, it is *kurh*. *Taw'* is the antonym of *karh*.

Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī writes: '*Ghuduww* and *ghadāt* refer to the earliest parts of the morning. The Qur'an juxtaposes *ghadāt* with *āṣāl*, such as in the verse, *at sunrise and sunset* (bi al-ghuduww wa al-āṣāl), and on another occasion he contrasts it with *'ashā*: *morning and evening* (bi al-ghadāt wa al-'ashā) (18:28).' *Ghuduww* is the plural of *ghadāt*, following the same pattern as *qunā* and *qanāt*. In Majma' al-bayān, we read: '*Āṣāl* is the plural of *uṣul*, and *uṣul* is the plural of *aṣīl*. Therefore, *Āṣāl* is a plural of a plural, derived from the plural *uṣul*, and it appears to refer to the beginning of the evening, which is after mid-afternoon (*'aṣr*) until the sun has set.

Social actions that humans perform for spiritual purposes, for instance, sitting high for embodying leadership, stepping forward to symbolize sovereignty and lordship, bending to show humiliation and insignificance, and falling to the ground to express the utmost humility and prostration of the worshipper before the dignity and high status of the worshipped, are named after their purposes. They are referred to by the same names, such as calling stepping forward advancement, and sovereignty and lordship are also termed advancement. Likewise, as specific bending is called bowing, humiliation and insignificance are also called bowing. Similarly, falling to the ground is referred to as prostration, and humility is also called prostration. All these are to convey that the purpose of these social actions is the same as their objectives and outcomes, and otherwise, no purpose is inherently related to these actions themselves.

This is how the Qur'an looks at prostration and other forms of devotion, glorification, praise, invocation, and other such acts, when it

attributes them to non-human entities, as in the verses: *All are obedient to Him* (30:26); *There is not a thing but celebrates His praise* (17:44); *Everyone in the heavens and the earth asks Him* (55:29); and *To Allah prostrates whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth* (16:49).

The distinction between these matters, when attributed to creatures and when occurring in the context of human society, is as follows: their ultimate goals and objectives in the first case are real, unlike in the second case, where the purpose of those actions is realized as a form of convention or figurality. For example, the humility and prostration of creatures before the court of God's greatness and majesty are true humility and prostration, in contrast to falling to the ground and kissing the earth in the context of human society, which is humility and prostration based on convention or figurality. This is indicated by the fact that it often happens that this falling to the ground and prostration are performed, but it is not understood as a form of veneration or as an expression of humility.

Taking the above into account in relation to the passage, *To Allah prostrates whoever there is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and their shadows at sunrise and sunset,* this is perhaps meant specifically for those beings endowed with intellect as the Qur'an says: *<u>whoever</u> there is in the heavens and the earth*. This is even though this humility and abasement before God encompasses all existing beings, as we shall see in our discussion of Sūrah al-Naḥl, and as is suggested at the end of the verse, which reads: *and their shadows at sunrise and sunset*. This is because the discourse in the present chapter is directed to the idol worshippers and arguing against them. So, in this, there is a message to them to prostrate to God willingly, just as those beyond them among the rational beings of the heavens and the earth prostrate willingly to the extent that even their shadows prostrate to Him. And for this reason, also, God calls attention to the prostration of the shadows to more forcefully rouse them to action, so ponder on this.

It must also be understood that the humility and submissiveness of all creatures before the expanse of their Sustainer is an intrinsic humility, from which no creature is disconnected or exempt. Therefore, it is certain that the submission of creatures will be voluntary and without direction. How can it be by command and compulsion when no creature possesses anything of itself to be assumed reluctant, or to refuse and rebel? Just as God Almighty has said: *Then He turned to the heaven, and it was smoke,*

and He said to it and to the earth, 'Come! Willingly or unwillingly!' They said, 'We come heartily' (41:11).

This verse suggests that the prostration of creatures before God Almighty is a voluntary act which they are eager to perform, and therefore leaves no room for the idea of compulsion. However, there is another way of looking at this that may allow for the attribution of compulsion to some extent for some creatures, namely humans. This is because a portion of creatures are situated in an assembled mass, and although they themselves are equipped with natures, there may be other causes that do not allow these creatures to achieve their intended goals and objectives. Indeed, creatures that are in our world, which is a world of matter and crowding, may encounter various and different obstacles in reaching the ultimate goals dictated by their natures, which are contrary to the requirements of these creatures' nature. It is clear that whatever is against nature is detestable, just as what is agreeable to nature is desirable.

With this in mind, these creatures, in all matters concerning themselves, are prostrated and submissive to the command of God. However, in some of the matters that are against their nature such as death, corruption, rendering their effects in the world null and void, misfortunes, and diseases, and the like, their prostration and humility to this aspect of God's command is unwilling. By contrast, in what conforms to their natures, such as life, survival, reaching their ultimate goal, success, and flourishing, this prostration is voluntary and obedient, like the submission of the angels who do not disobey God in what He orders them, but rather act accordingly.

From the above, the wrongness of the following explanation becomes clear: That what is meant by prostration is the real form of it, meaning to humble oneself on the ground by putting one's forehead on it, for example. They are all prostrating, but the believer prostrates willingly, and the disbeliever prostrates fearing the sword—this explanation has been attributed to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī.

The same is true of the statement of some: 'What is meant by prostration is submission, and everyone submits. However, from the believer, it is a submission of willingness, and from the disbeliever, it is a submission of reluctance due to the pains and illnesses that befall them.' This statement is attributed to al-Jubā'ī.

Similarly, others say: 'What is meant by the verse is the submission of everything in the heavens and the earth, whether rational beings or others. The expression specifically applies to rational beings due to their higher importance.'

Regarding the phrase, *and their shadows at sunrise and sunset*, this includes the shadows of material bodies in prostration. Even though the shadow, resulting from the body blocking the light, is non-existent, it has external effects. It increases and decreases at the ends of the day, clearly changing perceptibly. It has a sort of existence through these effects, and hence it is submissive to God in its existence and effects and prostrates to Him.

These shadows prostrate to God willingly at all times. The morning and evening are specifically mentioned, not in the sense of 'day and night' (signifying 'continuously'), but rather for emphasis. If continuous prostration were meant here, it would have been more appropriate to say, 'at the ends of the day,' covering everything before noon and after, as mentioned in His saying: *and glorify Him in watches of the night and at the day's ends, that you may be pleased* (20:130).

The point here, to the best of my knowledge, is that shadows continuously increase and decrease in size in the morning and evening, which is symbolic of falling on the ground and the humbling oneself through prostration. As for midday and the middle of the day, shadows may be absent or minimal, appearing still and not clearly displaying the image of prostration.

Undoubtedly, the fall of shadows on the ground and their representing the descent of prostration are considered in relating prostration to the shadows in their changes. This consideration is not limited to their mere existential obedience in all their conditions and effects. The evidence for this is His saying: *Have they not regarded that whatever thing Allah has created casts its shadow to the right and to the left, prostrating to Allah in utter humility?* (16:48). This idea is clearly evident in this verse: It is not merely a poetic saying or an purely imaginary image used in the true call of His words—God forbid—for He has specifically emphasized that the Qur'an is not poetry, but rather exalted truths, beyond all illusions, established for sound intellects that are far beyond sense perception by their very nature.

When such intellects encounter situations where it is possible for perception to manifest a kind of appearance, and it is represented in a way

that is more free to derive it in teaching naive understandings and simple minds, and transferring them from the level of perception and imagination to the stage of the sound intellect, recognizing true forms of knowledge. For then part of perception and imagination, the truth appearing with truths, supported by truth, so there is no harm in relying on it.

In this regard, God considers the observable reality of shadows, which extend from upright objects at dawn and dusk, as acts of prostration to Him due to their falling upon the earth, similar to the prostration of rational beings.

Also, related to this aspect is the preceding verse: *The Thunder celebrates His praise* (13:13). Here, the celebration of God's praise is applied to the tremendous sound of thunder, which is personified as a speaking tongue glorifying Him, asserting His transcendence above any resemblance to His creatures and praising Him for His mercy, heralded by wind, clouds, and lightning. Even though all things inherently glorify God by virtue of the fact that the core of their existence is utterly dependent upon Him, this is an intrinsic form of glorification from them. The meaning of their glorification is conveyed through intellectual signification rather than the kind of verbal signification that is commonly found in sounds as a matter of convention. But the thunder, with its intense, tremendous sound, represents this intrinsic and existential glorification of the Divine to the hearing and imagination. God invoked this profound image to help simple minds grasp the meaning of intrinsic glorification, established by every being's essence, without a sound ringing out or a word being uttered.

Similar to this is what has been previously mentioned in the opening of the chapter in His saying: *It is Allah who raised the heavens without any pillars that you see* (13:2) and His saying, *In the earth are neighboring terrains...* (13:4). In the context of the idolaters arguing against God, the Qur'an holds fast to matters whose causes are unknowable to human perception not because His causality and power is confined to such things while things with known causes are independent of Him. On the contrary, the Qur'an asserts the general law of causality and that He is the cause above all causes. Therefore, the reason why the Qur'an highlights things whose causes were unknown to its audience through their sense perceptions is because hidden things awaken people's minds and help them realize they must search for a better cause. This necessitates that they investigate the

causes for things, and such a search inevitably ends with the First Cause, which is God. There are many other examples of this in the Qur'an.

In essence, the Qur'an draws a parallel between the manner in which the shadows of objects stretch across the earth at dawn and dusk and their figurative prostration to God. This imagery serves to illustrate the concept of intrinsic prostration inherent in all beings, using a tangible example to awaken the senses to a deeper spiritual truth. It simplifies the journey from a simple understanding to grasping this profound intellectual truth.

This is what contemplating on the divine speech reveals. To interpret these meanings simply as poetic metaphor is inadequate. Similarly, seeing them only as allegorical representations falls short. One such example is the notion that everything obeys God's command by existing as He wills. Another is the idea that the shadow signifies the person; thus, when one prostrates, so does his shadow. These interpretations are superficial and do not merit serious consideration.

قُلْ مَن رَّبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ قُلِ اللَّهُ قُلْ أَفَاتَّخَذْتُم مِّن دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاء
لاَ يَمْلِكُونَ لِأَنفُسِهِمْ نَفْعًا وَلاَ ضَرًّا قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الأَعْمَى وَالْبَصِيرُ
أَمْ هَلْ تَسْتَوِي الظُّلُمَاتُ وَالنُّورُ أَمْ جَعَلُواْ لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاء خَلَقُواْ كَخَلْقِهِ
فَتَشَابَهَ الْخَلْقُ عَلَيْهِمْ قُلِ اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ﴿١٦﴾

(13:16) Say, 'Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth?' Say, 'Allah!' Say, 'Have you then taken others besides Him for guardians, who have no control over their own benefit or harm?' Say, 'Are the blind one and the seer equal? Or are the darkness and the light equal?' Have they set up for Allah partners who have created like His creation, so that the creations seemed confusable to them? Say, 'Allah is the creator of all things, and He is the One, the All-paramount.'

This verse, which bids the Prophet to debate with the idolaters, serves as an epitome of the preceding verses.

That is because the preceding verses clearly demonstrate that the governance of the heavens and the earth and everything within them is the sole purview of God, as is their creation. He alone possesses the knowledge, power, and mercy necessary for creating and sustaining the cosmos.

Everyone besides Him is created and governed by Him and possess no benefit or harm for themselves. This means that He is the one and only Lord.

God commanded His Prophet to articulate a conclusion that emerges from the preceding verses, making the truth clear to the idolaters. He was to pose the question, '*Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth?*' This question probes who truly owns and governs the heavens, the earth, and all within them. Then, the Prophet was to provide the answer himself, stating, 'Allah.' This directive comes in light of the idolaters' stubborn denial of the oneness of God's Lordship, indicating their failure to grasp the argument and understand the discourse presented to them.

Then, based on this conclusion, a second conclusion is inferred by which the invalidity of their association of partners with God becomes clearer. It is that the implication of His proven Lordship is that He alone is the possessor of benefit and harm for others. Everyone besides Him does not possess any benefit or harm for himself, so how can they bring benefit or harm to others? Therefore, adopting lords besides God, assuming that there are protectors other than Him who manage the affairs of servants and hold benefit and harm for them in reality, makes protectors of those who cannot be protectors because they do not own benefit or harm for themselves, so how could they own it for others? This is what is meant by His saying in response to the previous question, *Say, 'Have you then taken others besides Him for guardians, who have no control over their own benefit or harm?'* Meaning, when they have no control over their own benefit or harm how can they have control over it for others? Thus, if God is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, your claim, by adopting as protectors gods besides Him, is ultimately self-refuting and plainly invalid, as it contains a clear contradiction by claiming they are protectors while they evidently are not, and lords who possess none of the traits of lordship.

Reflecting on the previous discussion, the verse echoes the core message of its previous ones. It conveys something similar to our saying: 'Given the clarity of what has been presented, who could be the Lord of the heavens and the earth other than God? Why then would you seek protectors other than Him, protectors who neither benefit nor harm you or anyone else?' The shift from drawing conclusions from earlier statements instructing the Prophet to articulate specific points—'Say this' and 'Say that'— to posing a rhetorical question, reflects a strategic distance from direct engagement

(with them) due to their profound ignorance and obstinacy. This nuance is a testament to the subtle features of the Qur'an's eloquence.

Are the blind one and the seer equal? Or are the darkness and the light equal? These analogies, provided by God, come after a complete and thorough argument presented to the idolaters. God instructs His Prophet to offer these examples, which sharpen the contrast between the state of the believer and the non-believer. Despite undeniable evidence and explicit verses, the non-believer remains unyielding, akin to one who is blind, in contrast to the believer, who is likened to one with sight. It is unreasonable for any rational person to consider these two states as similar. Furthermore, the analogy extends to illustrate that disbelief is akin to darkness, with the non-believer enshrouded in it, as if blind, whereas belief is compared to light, with the believer clearly perceiving the truth. These two conditions are incomparable in every aspect. If the polytheists possess the sound judgment they profess, they would embrace the truth, renounce all falsehood, and place their faith in the One True God alone.

Have they set up for Allah partners who have created like His creation, so that the creations seemed confusable to them?—Note that God refers to the idolaters in the third person, saying, *Have they* set up ... and *so that the creations seemed confusable to them*, rather than speaking to them directly, saying: 'Have you set up...?' or '...so that the creations seemed confusable to you' shows that God is now speaking directly to the Prophet and not commanding him to relay the contents of His speech to them

Then, note how God shifts from asking, *Have they set up for Allah partners who have created like His creation, so that the creations seemed confusable to them?* to commanding the Prophet, *Say, 'Allah is the creator of all things, and He is the One, the All-paramount.'* This confirms that the question is directed to the Prophet and that when God commands him to proclaim the oneness of the creator to them, this is not in response to the question He asked him. This is because they do not believe in a creator other than God, as evinced by the verse, *If you ask them, 'Who created the heavens and the earth?' they will surely say, 'Allah.' Say, 'All praise belongs to Allah!' Yet most of them do not know* (31:25, 39:38), and this is something God has repeatedly related about them.

The idolaters did not believe that God Almighty had a partner in the creation or origination of the cosmos. They only disputed with Islam

regarding the oneness of lordship, not in the oneness of divinity, in the sense of the creation and origination of the cosmos. However, their acknowledgment of the unity of the Creator, and confining that role to God alone, refutes their own claim that he had partners in lordship, and completes the argument against them. Because creation and origination belong solely to God the Glorified, this negates any independence in existence, knowledge, or power in all others, and there can be no lordship in the absence of these attributes.

Therefore, they have no basis for claiming the lordship of the partners they associate with God the Glorified except to deny His exclusivity in creation and origination and to assign creation and origination to their gods, which they do not do. This is why God asks this question to the Prophet, without addressing it to the idolaters or commanding the Prophet to address it to them.

It is as though, by saying, *Have they set up for Allah partners who have created like His creation, so that the creations seemed confusable to them?*, God is telling his Prophet that the argument has been decisively completed against these people regarding the oneness of God's lordship because of His oneness in creation. Therefore, they have no recourse except to claim that their false deities are his partners in the creation and origination of the cosmos: Are they saying that their partners have created a creation like His creation, such that the two creations seemed similar to them, so they claimed that these partners possessed lordship that was similar to that of God?

Then He commands the prophet to present to them what would completely dispel such a nation by saying, *Say, 'Allah is the creator of all things, and He is the One, the All-paramount.'* The beginning of this sentence is a claim, its end is the evidence for this, namely that He, the Almighty, is One in His creative power, with no partner in it. How can there be a partner for Him in it, when He is the Unity who conquers every number and multiplicity? We have discussed some aspects of the meaning of Him being the One, the Dominant in our commentary on the verse: *Are different masters better, or Allah, the One, the All-paramount?* And it is clear there that the sum of these two attributes produces the attribute of unicity (*al-aḥadiyya*).

From the above, we can understand why the tone of the divine discourse shifts in the passage, *Have they set up for Allah partners who have*

created like His creation, so that the creations seemed confusable to them? from the tone that was previously being used. This is something worth contemplating further on, and know that most Qur'anic commentators fall prey to confusion when discussing the arguments God presents in the verses of the Qur'an to demonstrate His lordship and His oneness in it, while also negating any partners from it. Ultimately, they confused these arguments for the oneness of God's lordship versus polytheists with the arguments for the existence of a Creator versus atheists. So be mindful of this.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī transmits via his chain of narrators from ʿAbd al-Rahim al-Qāsir, from Abū Jaʿfar, regarding the verse, *You are only a warner, and there is a guide for every people* (13:7): 'The Messenger of God said, "I am the warner, and ʿAlī is the guide."

Author's comment: Traditions with this meaning are narrated by al-Kulaynī in *al-Kāfī*, al-Ṣadūq in *Maʿānī al-Akhbār*, al-Ṣaffār in *Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt*, al-ʿAyyāshī and al-Qummī in their respective commentaries, and by others via numerous differing chains of narration.

The meaning of his saying, 'I am the warner and ʿAlī is the guide' is that I am the referent of the warner, and warning is guidance (*hidāya*) accompanied by a claim of prophethood (*daʿwa*), while ʿAlī is the referent of the guide without the claim of prophethood, and he is the Imām. It is not the case that the intended meaning of the warner is the Messenger of God and the intended meaning by the guide is ʿAlī, for that is utterly contradictory to the apparent meaning of the verse.

(2) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Suyūṭī cites Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Mardawayh, Abū Naʿīm's *Maʿrifa*, al-Daylamī, Ibn ʿAsākir, and Ibn al-Najjār, saying: 'When it was revealed, *You are only a warner, and there is a guide for every people*, the Messenger of God placed his hand on his chest and said, "I am the warner", and he gestured with his hand to the shoulder of ʿAlī and said, "You are the guide—O ʿAlī, by you the rightly guided ones will be guided after me!"

Author's comment: And it was narrated by al-Thaʿlabī in *al-Kashf*, from ʿAtā' b. al-Sā'ib, from Saʿīd b. Jubayr, from Ibn ʿAbbās, from the Prophet.

(3) In his *Mustadrak*, al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī transmits via his chain of narrators from Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥakam b. Zuhayr from his father from al-Ḥakam b. Jarīr from Abī Burayda al-Aslamī, who said: 'The Messenger of God called for water to perform ritual ablutions while ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib was with him. Then, the Messenger of God took ʿAlī's hand after he had purified himself and stuck it to his chest—then he said, "*You are only a warner*" and he meant himself, then he returned it to ʿAlī's chest—then he said, "*and there is a guide for every people*", then he said to him: "You are the beacon for mankind, the ultimate guidance, and the leader of the Qur'an reciters—I bear witness to that indeed you are as such.'

Author's comment: And this was narrated by Ibn Shahrāshūb from al-Ḥākim in his *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, and al-Marzubānī in *Mā Nazala min al-Qur'an fī Amīr al-Mu'minīn*.

(4) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Suyūṭī narrates it from ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad in *Zawā'id al-Musnad*, from Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Awsaṭ*, and al-Ḥākim, and he declared it to have a sound chain, and Ibn Madawayh and Ibn ʿAsākir both narrate from ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib concerning the verse, '*You are only a warner, and there is a guide for every people*,' he said: 'The Messenger of God is the warner and I am the guide.' And in another version: 'And the guide is a man from the Banū Hāshim, by which he meant himself.'

Author's comment: There are many other narrations reported in Sunni sources with the same meaning.

(5) In *Maʿānī al-akhbār*, Shaykh al-Ṣadūq narrates from Muḥammad b. Muslim, who said: 'I asked Abū ʿAbd Allāh about God's saying: *You are only a warner, and there is a guide for every people.* He said: "Every Imām is a guide for all people in their time."'

(6) And in *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī reports via his chain of narrators from Fuḍayl, who said:' I asked Abū ʿAbd Allāh about the saying of God, the Mighty and Sublime: *... and there is a guide for every people.* He said: 'every Imām is a guide for the generation in which he lives.'

(7) And in the same source, it is related via a chain of narration from Abī Baṣīr, that he said: 'I asked Abī ʿAbd Allāh about the verse,

You are only a warner, and there is a guide for every people. He said: "The Messenger of God said: 'I am the warner and ʿAlī is the guide.' O Abā Muḥammad, is there a guide today?" I said: "May I be your sacrifice, there has always been one guide after another from your household until it reached you!" He said: "May God have mercy on you, O Abā Muḥammad, if a verse was revealed about a man, then that man died, the verse would die, and the Book as a whole would die. However, it continues in those who remain as it continued in those who have already passed."'

Author's comment: The narration confirms what we have argued, namely that the verse refers to ʿAlī as a form of applying a verse's meaning to a new instance (*jarī*). It continues to apply to the rest of the Imāms in the same vein, and this application is what is actual meant by those traditions stating that the verse was revealed about ʿAlī.

(8) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Muḥammad b. Muslim that he said: 'I asked Abū ʿAbd Allāh about the saying of God: *Allah knows what every female carries, and what the wombs reduce and what they increase* (13:8). He said: '*What the wombs reduce* refer to whatever does not result in pregnancy, *and what they increase* refers to male and female both.'

Author's comment: When he says: 'male and female both,' he means what increases beyond one from one as evidenced by the following narration.

(9) In the same source, we read from Muḥammad b. Muslim and others from the Imām, that he said: *what every female* carries—every one of female or male *what the wombs reduce*—whatever does not result in pregnancy— *and what they increase*—of female or male.

(10) And in *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī transmits via his chain of narration from Ḥurayz, from someone he mentioned, from either Imām al-Bāqir or Imām al-Ṣādiq, regarding the saying of God Almighty: *Allah knows what every female carries, and what the wombs reduce and what they increase*. The Imām said: 'What they *reduce* refers to every pregnancy less than nine months, *and what they increase* refers to everything that continues beyond nine months. So, whenever a woman sees pure blood in her pregnancy from menstruation, she increases by the number of days she sees blood in her

pregnancy.

Author's comment: And this is another explanation of the verse and transmitted from some of the earliest exegetes of the Qur'an.

(11) In *Maʿānī al-Akhbār*, it is narrated from Thaʿlaba b. Maymūn, from one of our companions, from Abī ʿAbd Allāh, concerning the words of God Almighty: *the Knower of the sensible and the Unseen*. He said: 'The *Unseen* refers to what has not occurred, and the *sensible* to what has already taken place.'

Author's comment: The meaning of 'what has not occurred' is not something that is still non-existent: A potentiality that has not yet entered the circumstances of actuality. What he mentioned are some examples of this, and this is obvious.

(12) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Suyūṭī reports from Ibn Al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Kabir*, Ibn Mardawayh, and Abū Nuʿaym in *al-Dalā'il*, all of whom report via ʿAtā' b. Yasār from Ibn ʿAbbās that Arbad b. Qays and ʿĀmir b. al-Ṭufayl came to Medina to the Messenger of God. They approached him while he was sitting and sat before him. ʿĀmir asked, 'What will you grant me if I embrace Islam?' The Prophet replied: 'For you is what is for the Muslims and upon you is what is upon them.' He said, 'Will you assign the command to me after you if I embrace Islam?' He said, 'Neither for you nor for your people, but you shall lead your own people.' He said, 'Then assign to me the pastures, and for you the cities.' The Prophet said, 'No.' As they left his presence, he said, 'I will surely fill it against you with horses and men.' The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, 'God will prevent you.'

When Arbad and ʿĀmir exited, ʿĀmir said, 'O Arbad, I will distract Muḥammad with talk and you strike him with the sword, for if Muḥammad is killed, the people will not demand more than being content with the blood-money, and they will be averse to war, so we will give them the blood-money.' Arbad said, 'Do it.' So, they returned and ʿĀmir said, 'O Muḥammad, stand with me, I want to talk to you.' He stood with him, and they went to the wall. ʿĀmir was talking to him and Arbad tried to draw the sword. When he put his hand on the handle of the sword to draw it, it clung to it,

and he could not unsheathe it. And Arbad delayed ʿĀmir in striking, so the Messenger of God turned and saw Arbad and what he was doing and turned away from them. ʿĀmir said to Arbad, 'Why did you hold back?' He said, 'I put my hand on the handle of the sword and it became stuck.'

When ʿĀmir and Arbad left the presence of the Messenger of God and traveled until they were at Ḥarra Raqim. They set down, and Saʿd b. Muʿādh and Usayd b. Ḥuḍāyr came out to them and said, "You are uncovered, O enemies of God, may God curse you both," and attacked them. ʿĀmir said, "Who is this, O Saʿd?" Saʿd said, "This is Usayd b. Ḥuḍayr al-Katāʾib." He said, "By God, surely Ḥuḍayr was a friend to me."

When they were at Raqim, God sent a lightning bolt upon Arbad, killing him. And ʿĀmir continued on his way until when he was at al-Kharīb. There, God afflicted him with an ulcer, and death overtook him therein. God revealed the verses: *Allah knows what every female carries ... He has guardian angels, to his front and his rear* .... (13:8–11). He explained: "Guardian angels protect Muḥammad by God's command, then he mentioned Arbad and his manner of death, then said: '*It is He who shows you the lightning, inspiring fear and hope ... though He is great in might*' (13:12-13).

Author's comment: A tradition with a similar meaning is narrated from al-Ṭabarī and Abū Shaykh from Ibn Zayd; at the end of it, Labīd spoke about his brother Arbad while mourning him:

'I fear for Arbad the thunderbolts and I do not,
Fear the cloud and the lion.
Thunder and lightning surprised the knight,
On the calamitous day in the Najd.'

However, what the narration mentions about the revelation of these verses in the story does not suit the fact that the verses appear to be Meccan, nor does it suit the tone of the verses based on our prior discussions.

(13) Also in *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Suyūṭī cites Ibn al-Mundhir and Abū Shaykh, who narrate from ʿAlī, about the verse, *He has guardian angels, to his front and his rear, who guard him by Allah's command*: 'There is not a servant except with him are angels, guarding him from a wall collapsing upon him, or falling into a

well, or being eaten by a lion, or drowning, or burning. But when the divine determination (*al-qadr*) comes, they leave him to God's determination.'

Author's comment: A narration with the same meaning is narrated from Abū Dāwūd about the divine determination, and Ibn Abī Dunyā, and Ibn ʿAsākir, from him. And a narration with the same meaning is also narrated from Imām al-Bāqir and Imām al-Ṣādiq.

(14) And in *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Fuḍayl b. ʿUthmān, from Abī ʿAbd Allāh he mentioned the verse, *He has guardian angels* (muʿaqqibāt)*, to his front and his rear, who guard him by Allah's command*. Then he said: 'From before, from after—the *muʿaqqibāt* are the righteous deeds that endure (*bāqiyāt ṣāliḥāt*).'

Author's comment: The apparent meaning of this tradition is that the righteous deeds that endure are one of the things two which the term *muʿaqqibāt* used in this verse refers. In other words, these righteous deeds protect their doer from the evil of the divine decree (*al-qaḍā'*), but they do not protect their doer except through the angels who are charged with watching over him. Therefore, the meaning of this tradition accords with what we have presented in our explanation of the verse. And it is possible that 'from before, from after' (*al-mu'akhkharāt wa al-muqaddamāt*) are identical with 'the righteous deeds that endure,' and it is clear how this relates to our explanation.

(15) In the same source, it is narrated from Abū ʿAmr al-Madā'inī from Abū ʿAbd Allāh: 'Surely, my father used to say: "Indeed, God has made an irrevocable decree that He will not bless a servant with a blessing and then deprive him of it before the servant commits a sin that necessitates the removal of it. This is according to God's saying, *Indeed Allah does not change a people's lot, unless they change what is in their souls.*"'

(16) And in the same source, it is related from Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, from Abū al-Ḥasan al-Riḍā, regarding God's saying, *Indeed Allah does not change a people's lot, unless they change what is in their souls. And when Allah wishes to visit ill on a people, there is nothing that can avert it*: 'So, the matter returns to God, the Exalted.'

Author's comment: This is a reference to what we have previously explained regarding the meaning of the verse.

(17) And in *Maʿānī al-Akhbār*, al-Ṣadūq narrates via his chain from ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Faḍl, from his father, who said: 'I heard Abū Khālid al-Kābulī say: "I heard Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn say: 'The sins that alter blessings are committing wrongs against people and forsaking good habits, making a pretense of virtue, ingratitude for blessings, and abandonment of thanksgiving. God Almighty said, *Indeed Allah does not change a people's lot, unless they change what is in their souls.*'"'

(18) And in the same source, via a chain from Ḥasan b. Faḍl, from al-Riḍā, regarding the verse,) *It is He who shows you the lightning, inspiring fear and hope* (13:12)*,* He said: 'Fear of the traveler and hope for the resident.'

(19) And in the *Tafsīr al-Nuʿmānī*, from al-Aṣbagh b. Nabāta, from ʿAlī regarding God's saying, *though He is great in might* (13:13): 'He means in plotting (*makr*).'

(20) And in the *Āmālī* of al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, he narrates via his chain from Anas b. Mālik that that the messenger of God sent a man to one of the tyrants of the Arabs, calling him to God Almighty. He said to the messenger: 'Inform me about this to which you call me—is it from silver or gold or from iron?' He returned to the Prophet and informed him of what the ruler had said. The Prophet said: 'Return to him and invite him.' He said: 'O Prophet of God, he is too stubborn for that.' He said: 'Return to him.' The messenger returned and did as he had been told, and while he was speaking to him, a cloud suddenly thundered and cast down a lightning bolt on his head, taking the top of his head off. God Almighty then revealed the verse: *'...and He releases the thunderbolts and strikes with them whomever He wishes. Yet they dispute concerning Allah, though He is great in might*' (13:13).

Author's comment: The same can be said of the end of this story as was said about that of ʿĀmir and Arbad. To this can also be added that there is no basis for this report splitting the revelation verse into different parts, such that only '... *and He releases the thunderbolts ...*' was revealed at this point.

(21) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, it is narrated from Abū al-Jārūd, from from Abī Jaʿfar, regarding the verse, *To Allah prostrates whoever there is*

> *in the heavens and the earth* ... (13:15): 'As for those who prostrate among the inhabitants of the heavens voluntarily, they are the angels, for they prostrate to God voluntarily. As for those who prostrate from the inhabitants of the earth who were born into Islam, they prostrate to Him voluntarily. And as for those who prostrate to Him unwillingly, they are compelled to Islam. And as for those who do not prostrate at all, their shadows prostrate for them in the morning and the evening.'

Author's comment: The apparent of the narration contradicts the context of the verse under discussion, for the context of the verse is expounding the fact that He subjugation all beings through His greatness and exaltedness, whether they are in the heavens or the earth, and whether themselves or even their shadows. The verse informs us of their prostration to Him the Exalted through the essence of prostration. The apparent meaning of the narration is that prostration is used in the literal sense of lowering oneself and placing the forehead on the ground or the like thereof, whether by them or by their shadows. And regardless of whether they actually prostrated willingly or unwillingly or whether the falling of their shadows on the earth resembles prostration, none of this glorifies God Almighty, contrary to what we have said about the meaning of the verse.

In addition to this, the quoted narration does not accord with the inclusiveness visible in His saying: *and their shadows at sunrise and sunset*. Clearer than this is the inclusiveness that can be seen in His saying: *Have they not regarded that whatever thing Allah has created casts its shadow to the right and to the left, prostrating to Allah in utter humility? To Allah prostrates whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth, including animals and angels, and they are not arrogant* (16:48–49).

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Verses 17–26

After having completed the argument against the idolaters in the conclusion of the previous verses and then clarifying for them the evident distinction between truth and falsehood, and the difference between those who adhere to one or follow the other, by saying: *Say, 'Are the blind one and the seer equal? Or are the darkness and the light equal?,'* God now embarks upon a detailed explanation of the differences between the two paths: The path of truth, which is belief in God and good deeds, and the path of falsehood, which is idolatry and wicked deeds, and their people, who are the believers and the idolaters. It is stated that the former will have peace and the outcome of the abode, while the latter will have God's curse, and for them is the evil of the abode. God expands His provision for whomever He wills and constricts it for whomever He wills. He, the Exalted, begins this section of verses with a parable, which clarifies the state of truth and falsehood and the distinct impact of each, and then builds the rest of the discussion upon that in describing the state of the two paths and the two groups, respectively.

أَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاء مَاء فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا فَاحْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَّابِيًا وَمِمَّا يُوقِدُونَ عَلَيْهِ فِي النَّارِ ابْتِغَاء حِلْيَةٍ أَوْ مَتَاعٍ زَبَدٌ مِّثْلُهُ كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْحَقَّ وَالْبَاطِلَ فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاء وَأَمَّا مَا يَنفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الأَرْضِ كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الأَمْثَالَ ﴿١٧﴾

(13:17) He sends down water from the sky whereat the valleys are flooded (*awdiya*) to their capacity (*bi qadari-hā*), and the flood carries along (*iḥtamala*) a swelling scum (*zabad*). And from what they smelt (*yūqadūn ʿalay-hi*) in the fire for the purpose of ornaments or wares (*matāʿ*), a similar scum. That is how Allah compares the truth and falsehood (*bāṭil*). As for the scum, it leaves as dross (*jufāʾ*), and that which profits the people remains (*yamkuthu*) in the earth. That is how Allah draws comparisons.

In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī writes: 'A *wādī* is the downward slope of a great mountain where rainwater gathers. From it, the term *diya*, for blood-money, is derived because it is a collection of significant wealth that is paid in compensation for the life of a slain person.

As for *qadar* ('measure,' 'capacity'), it is the pairing of something with something else, neither increasing nor decreasing, whereas weight (*wazn*) can increase or decrease. If it is equal, it is the measure (*qadar*). Al-Ḥasan read it as "bi qadri-ha" with a *sukūn* on the *dāl*. However, this does not make any difference to the meaning of the verse.

Iḥtimāl (from whence the verb *iḥtamala* derives) means to carry something, specifically something borne by the strength of the carrier.

An example of its use can be seen in the expression: *ʿalā sawtu-hu ʿalā fulān fa-iḥtamala-hu wa lam yaghḍabu-hu* ('he raised his voice at so-and-so, but they bore it and did not become angry with him.')

The word *zabad* refers to the foam produced when a liquid boils, and the impurities that settle on the surface of it, and from this category is the foam of the pot (*zabad al-qidr*) and the foam of a flood (*zabad al-sayl*).

The word *jufā'*, read with an elongated sound, is on the measure of *al-ghithā'* (worthless material) and its original meaning is *hamz*, which means 'to prod'. For instance, people say '*jafā al-wādī*' the meaning of '*jafā*" here is that it gave off foam, or they say '*jafa'tu al-rajul*,' meaning 'I threw the man down in wrestling,' or they say *ajfa'tu al-qidr bi-zabadi-hā*,' meaning 'I removed the foam from the pot.'

Al-Farra' said: Every thing whose parts join together comes on the form of '*faʿāl*,' such as *ḥuṭām* ('debris'), *qumāsh* ('junk'), *ghathā'* ('garbage'), and *jafā'* ('dross').

Īqād (translated here as 'smelt') means to throw firewood into the fire, and from the same root are derived the verbs *istawqada* ('to kindle'), *ittaqda* ('to ignite'), and *taqawwada* ('to burn').

Matāʿ ('wares') denotes 'something that is enjoyed or utilized' (*mā tamattaʿat bi-hi*).

Makath ('to remain') means to stay in a particular place over the passage of time. One says *makatha* and *tamakaththa*.'

Al-Rāghib writes: '*Bāṭil* ('falsehood') is the opposite of truth (*ḥaqq*), and it denotes something that does not withstand scrutiny. God has said,

That is because Allah is the Reality (al-ḥaqq)*, and what they invoke besides Him is nullity* (al-bāṭil) (22:62). An the word *bāṭil* can be used in relation to both statements and actions. For example, ... *and what they had wrought was reduced to naught* (7:118), and *Why do you mix the truth with falsehood* (3:71).'

The falsity of something is that it is conceived to have a kind of existence, but when applied to the external world, it does not hold up and does not match external reality. Truth is contrary to this. Both truth and falsehood refer first and foremost to a belief and then to other things through some consideration or another.

For example, saying the sky is above us and the earth below us is true because it corresponds to reality when examined and applied to it. But saying the sky is below us and the earth above us is false because this conception does not hold up to a comparison with the real world. An action is true if it achieves its intended purpose or command, such as eating to satiate one's hunger, striving for one's livelihood, and drinking medicine for the sake of one's health, if it has its effect and achieves its purpose. It is false if it does not achieve its intended goal or fulfill its aim. Something existing externally is true in that it exists as believed, like the existence of God. Something non-existent, though believed to exist, is false because it does not exist in external reality. Similarly, if something exists but is believed to be endowed with properties that it does not have, like assuming the independence and permanence for a contingent being's existence, then it is false in terms of the posited independence or permanence of existence, even if it is true in terms of its basic existence. The poem reads:

'Behold! All things are false except for God. Every luxury will inevitably fade.'

The verse under discussion is one of the most outstanding verses to explore the nature of truth and falsehood, describing their origins, how they appear, and their unique effects on the world, as well as expounding God's modus operandi in relation to each of them, and you will not find a change or alteration in God's modus operandi.

This is elucidated by the example God gives to people in the present verse. It is not two examples as some have said, nor three as others have suggested. As we will explain, it is a single example broken down into parts.

God says, *He sends down water from the sky whereat the valleys are flooded to their capacity, and the flood carries along a swelling scum*. Note that the agent of the verb 'sends down' is God, but this is not explicitly mentioned because it is already clear that this is who is meant. The indefinite appearance of 'sky' indicates the kind of water, which is pure, clear water, meaning the water that is not mixed with anything else or undergoing change. The indefinite 'valleys' further indicates their differences in size, length, and breadth, and their variation in capacity and depth. The flowing of water is metaphorically attributed to the valleys, like our saying: 'the water channel flowed.' The foam is described as swelling because it floats and always rises above the torrent. All this is indicated by the context, and if the flood is given as an example, it is because the act of frothing is more visible in a flood than in ordinary waters.

The meaning of the verse is that the exalted God, from the sky which is situated above, sends down water through rain, and in the channels that are in the place of rains and differ in terms of size and capacity, each flows according to its own capacity, that is, in a large channel as much as its capacity, and in a small channel as much as its capacity. The flood is set on its way, so the flowing floods in each channel threw revolving froth on themselves, such that it covered the surface of the water.

And from what they smelt in the fire for the purpose of ornaments or wares, a similar scum: What is meant here are various metals and earthly materials capable of melting and casting, from which they make ornaments and utensils for everyday life. The meaning is that froth does not only arise from a flood, but also from what they kindle fire upon to make ornaments (gold and silver) or life's utensils (iron, copper, etc.), froth appears like the froth of a flood, revolving and rising on the surface of the melted material.

Then God said: *That is how Allah compares* (yaḍrib) *the truth and falsehood*, meaning that God establishes truth and falsehood as the same way as He did in the torrent and its foam, and what they heat upon in the fire and its foam.

Note that the verb here is *yaḍrib*, which literally means 'to strike.' It appears to be used in the sense of establishing something (*tathbīt*), like pitching a tent (*ḍarab al-khayma*). It is frequently used in this sense, such as when God says that the People of the Book were 'struck' with

abasement and poverty (3:112), meaning that these states have befallen them. Elsewhere, God says that a wall will be 'struck' between the hypocrites and the faithful on the Day of Judgment (57:13), meaning that it will be built and raised. Elsewhere still, God tells Moses to 'strike' a path for the Israelites through the sea (20:77), meaning to open and establish one. It is to this sense of the word 'strike' that 'to strike a parable' (*ḍarab al-mathal*), which means to set forth a comparison in which an exemplar is presented to exemplify the object of the comparison. In all these cases, the actual meaning of 'striking' also applies, and this is intentional, because striking, which is the act of placing something upon something else with force, is usually not devoid of establishing one thing in the other. For example, when we hammer a nail, we fix the nail in place, and when we strike an animal, we cause pain and discomfort in its body. Therefore, in all of these cases, the original meaning of 'striking' (*ḍarab*) is invoked, because it contains within itself the implication of fixing something in place or establishing it.

Based on this, it appears that the saying of the commentators that in the sentence there is an ellipsis or metaphor—for example, that God sets forth the example of truth and falsehood, or the example of truth and the example of falsehood—according to their differing explanations of the verse, is baseless because it is superfluous. This is because, if that was indeed what God intended to say in this verse, the most suitable place to say it would have been at the end of His statement, where He already says, *That is how God draws comparisons*, and the presence of this statement renders such ellipses unnecessary.

After all, what they have mentioned about the meaning of the verse ultimately comes back to what we have said. Indeed, discussions about the flood and the foam, or smelting and its foam, as an example of truth and falsehood, necessitates the establishment of truth analogous to the establishment of the flood and smelting, and the establishment of falsehood analogous to the establishment of foam. Therefore, there is no basis for arguing for an ellipsis in the verse, as the meaning is already complete without it.

Then He, the Exalted, said: *As for the scum, it leaves as dross, and that which profits the people remains in the earth.* This sentence aggregates two kinds of froth, namely the froth of a flood and the froth of metals,

although they were previously mentioned separately. This is because the characteristic mentioned for them is mutual, which is the disappearance of both by the drying of the flood and the cooling of the metal. We have previously noted that the noble verse includes a simile, even though it may be dissolved into several similes.

Note that in this sentence, instead of saying that water or pure metal remains on the earth, God says *that which profits the people* to indicate the special quality that distinguishes truth from falsehood, namely that people benefit from it, and it is the ultimate goal that they should seek.

Therefore, the meaning is: but the froth that sits on top of the flood, or from metals that are smelted in fire, vanishes and becomes null, while the pure water or metal that people benefit from remains on the earth and is used.

Then, He says, *That is how Allah draws comparisons*—with this sentence the discourse is concluded. Its meaning is that the examples that the Lord brings in His speech for people are like this example that is brought in this verse, in distinguishing truth from falsehood, what is useful for people in their livelihood and hereafter is explained.

And it is not unlikely that the demonstrative pronoun '*that*' in the sentence refers to the coming of rain, the flowing of the flood through the valleys, the smelting of metals, and the froth that results from both. In summary, it refers to these external incidents themselves, not to statements about them. Consequently, it suggests that such events and incidents that occur in the visible world are examples that guide the possessors of wisdom and insight to the truths of the unseen world—this world is a visible sign that points toward what is contained in the unseen world, and this has been repeatedly mentioned in the Qur'an. And it is evident that there is not much difference between these parables or comparisons that God strikes and the signs He sets up.

Several theological and philosophical points are clarified by the example that is struck in the verse under discussion.

First, the existence that is bestowed upon all beings by God Almighty is in reality akin to the rain that descends from the sky to the earth. It is a divine mercy that is conferred upon all creatures by their Lord. Furthermore, this existence is devoid of any specific form, limitation, or

measure, and it is from the side of the creatures themselves that it becomes limited and determined by boundaries and dimensions, just like rainwater. If it acquires a specific measure and form, it is because of the various receptacles it comes to occupy, with each being a mold of a specific size and form. The creatures of the world, each according to their capacity, capability, and readiness, receive existence, which is a divine gift.

And it is this fundamental and profound principle to which many verses of the Qur'an refer, or at least hint at it, such as the verse *And there is not a thing but with Us are the stores thereof, and We send it not down save in appointed measure.* (15:21), and His saying: *and He has sent down for you eight mates of the cattle* (39:6), and all the verses speaking about the divine measure or determination (*qadr*) demonstrate this fact.

And these affairs, called measurements or determinations (*aqdār*, sing. *qadr*), though they are extraneous to the celestial bounty and are determining agents for it, are nonetheless never outside the dominion of God and take shape only with His permission, as He has said: *and to Him all matters are returned* (11:123) and also said: *Rather all dispensation belongs to Allah* (13:31). By combining these verses with those discussed here, another principle becomes clear, which is even more precise and has even more instances.

Secondly: The distribution of this heavenly mercy throughout the valleys of the world and its measurement in specific quantities is invariably accompanied by impurities and superfluities that rise above and become visible from it. However, these are futile, meaning transient and not lasting, unlike that descending mercy measured in specific quantities, which is enduring and stable, signifying truth. Consequently, what exists in the world is divided into two categories: the 'truth,' which is permanent and lasting, and the 'false,' which is fleeting and unstable.

And the truth is from God, Glorious is He, and the falsehood is not attributed to Him, even though it is by His permission. God says: *This is the truth from your Lord* (3:60), and He says: *We did not create the sky and the earth and whatever is between them in vain* (38:27). Then these existences each include a part of the truth, fixed, not vanishing, it will return to it by the nullification of what is false from it as He says: *We did not create the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them except with reason and*

for a specified term (46:3), and He says: *Allah will confirm the truth with His words* (10:82), and He says: *Indeed falsehood is bound to vanish* (17:81), and He says: *Rather We hurl the truth against falsehood, and it crushes its head, and behold, falsehood vanishes!* (21:18).

Third is the principle that one truth does not conflict with or encroach upon another truth. Instead, it supports and benefits it on its journey towards perfection and guides it towards the path of happiness. This is evidenced by the association of endurance and persistence in the verse with the truth that benefits humankind.

The intended meaning of negating contradiction is not the removal of conflict and competition among things in our observable world. Indeed, our world is a realm of conflict and struggle, where fire is extinguished by water and water is evaporated by fire, where land is consumed by plants and plants are consumed by animals, and then animals devour each other, only for the earth to ultimately consume all. Rather, the point is that despite the predatory nature and conflict among these elements, they cooperate in fulfilling divine purposes. Each element facilitates the others in achieving their specific ends. For example, a hammer and wood, despite their inherent opposition, work together to serve the carpenter in making a door. Similarly, the scales in a balance, though they conflict and struggle against each other, comply with the person controlling the balance for accurate weighing.

This is in contrast to falsehood, such as a flaw in the hammer or inaccuracy in the scales, which directly opposes the true purpose and renders efforts fruitless, causing destruction without repair and harm without benefit.

This principle is also reflected in numerous verses about subjugation in the Qur'an, such as when it says: *And He has disposed for you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth; all is from Him* (45:13). Each element in the heavens and the earth acts according to its nature, but in doing so, it contributes to fulfilling the purposes intended by God.

These principles derived from the noble verse are the ones that lead to the detailed rulings of creation and existence. Indeed, if you ponder over the Qur'anic verses that mention truth and falsehood and reflect deeply upon them, you will find them astonishing.

Know that these principles, just as they apply to physical matters and external realities, also hold true in the realms of knowledge and beliefs. For instance, true beliefs within a believer are like the water descending from the heavens, flowing through valleys of varying widths, benefiting people, revitalizing their hearts, and leaving behind goodness and blessings. On the other hand, false beliefs within a disbeliever are like the froth that rises in a flood, which soon dissipates, leaving nothing behind. As God says: *Allah fortifies those who have faith with an immutable word in the life of this world and in the Hereafter, and Allah leads astray the wrongdoers, and Allah does whatever He wishes* (14:27).

لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُواْ لِرَبِّهِمُ الْحُسْنَى وَالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُواْ لَهُ لَوْ أَنَّ لَهُم مَّا فِي الأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ لافْتَدَوْا بِهِ أُوْلَئِكَ لَهُمْ سُوءُ الْحِسَابِ وَمَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ ﴿١٨﴾

(13:18) For those who answer their Lord there shall be the best (*al-ḥusnā*). But those who do not answer Him, even if they possessed all that is on the earth and as much of it besides, they would surely offer it to redeem themselves with it. For such there shall be an adverse reckoning, and their refuge shall be hell, and it is an evil resting place (*mihād*).

The term *mihād* refers to a piece of furniture, such as a mattress, that is laid out for a person to lie on, and a prepared place for resting. Hell is called a *mihād* in this verse because it has been prepared and made as a resting place for disbelievers due to their disbelief and evil deeds.

The present verse and the nine verses that follow build on the similitude drawn by God in the previous verse. In these verses, God highlights the effects of true belief, faith, and accepting His call, as well as the effects of false belief, disbelief, and disregarding His call. The sequence of verses supports this as they revolve around the consequences of belief and disbelief, and they conclude that the praiseworthy outcome for belief is incomparable to anything and cannot be matched by any worldly blessing.

Regarding the use of the term *al-ḥusnā* ('the best'), it seems that the intended meaning is most likely the best outcome or consequence. Some scholars have suggested that *ḥusnā* might refer to the best reward or to

Paradise itself. However, while this may be correct according to the general context of the verse, the ultimate reward and outcome for the believers would be the divine blessing and Paradise. However, the reward itself or the Paradise is not the primary focus of the verse, rather, it is the end result of following the path of belief and where their efforts lead them.

This explanation is further supported and indicated by God's description of the believers in the following verses, in which He enumerates their unique qualities: *For such will be the outcome of the ultimate abode: the Gardens of Eden, which they will enter* (13:22–23).

In this sense also, we can understand the words: ... *even if they possessed all that is on the earth and as much of it besides, they would surely offer it to redeem themselves with it* (13:18), the fact that the verse does not mention what they are seeking to redeem themselves from is supposed to convey the tremendousness, severity, and horror of the matter, which is beyond description.

Therefore, the verse means: Those who do not respond to their Lord will experience an outcome—or they will miss the outcome that would have followed from their response and its good consequences—so severe in nature that if they had all the blessings on earth, including even the utmost luxuries and what is beyond the imagination or desire of a human being, they would exchange it all just to avoid the consequences of not responding to the call of faith. In a tradition from Imām ʿAlī, he describes it thusly: 'what will befall them is beyond description.'

Then, God informs the audience about the indescribable consequences of the disbeliever's actions, saying: *For such there shall be an adverse reckoning* (sūʾ al-ḥisāb)*, and their refuge shall be hell*—the worst reckoning means the one which makes them suffer and does not bring them any happiness. God then condemns their terrible fate by saying: *and it is an evil resting place*—meaning how wretched is the resting place that has been prepared for them to stay in. The phrase, *For such there shall be an adverse reckoning*, and the rest of the verse serves as a rationale for what was previously mentioned about wishing to redeem themselves with all of the world's wealth and explaining the severity of the consequences for not responding to His call.

The meaning of this verse, to the best of my knowledge, is that those

who respond to the true call of their Lord will receive a good outcome in the Hereafter. However, those who do not respond to this call will face an outcome that they are not pleased with and will attempt to avoid. This is because the negative outcome they face will include a severe judgment and a miserable abode.

In this verse, the concept of responding or not responding to the call is used to illustrate the previously mentioned similitude about the rain coming down from the sky and the valleys accepting it to varying degrees. In this context, responding to the call refers to accepting the invitation to faith.

أَفَمَن يَعْلَمُ أَنَّمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَبِّكَ الْحَقُّ كَمَنْ هُوَ أَعْمَىٰ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُوْلُواْ الأَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩﴾

(13:19) Is someone who knows that what has been sent down to you from your Lord is the truth, like someone who is blind? Only those who possess intellect take admonition—

This is a rhetorical question with the force of a denial that serves as a justification for the contents of the previous verse, and it provides a detailed explanation of the outcomes for both groups, based on their responding to the call of truth or failure to do so.

In summary, the truth will settle in the hearts of those who responded to their Lord, making their hearts wise and enlightened, with all the blessings and positive effects, such as remembrance and insight. Among the distinct traits of these hearts, which their possessors may recognize, is that they are firmly committed to fulfilling God's covenant that was established through their innate human nature. They do not break the pledge they made to their Lord, and they maintain a firm respect for the ties of kinship that God has established, connecting them to others in humility and fear. They are patient in dealing with hardships, avoiding sins, and engaging in acts of worship, including prayer, and community-building through charitable giving, as well as repelling evil deeds with good ones.

These individuals will ultimately achieve the praiseworthy abode, which is paradise. They will enter paradise and receive the rewards of their righteous deeds therein, accompanied by the virtuous believers among their ancestors, spouses, and offspring, as they maintained the bonds of

kinship in this life. Angels will enter upon them from every door, greeting and acknowledging their patience, just as they opened the doors of various acts of worship and obedience in this world. This is the effect of the truth.

God asks, *Is someone who knows that what has been sent down to you from your Lord is the truth, like someone who is blind?* This rhetorical question serves to negate the equality between those whose hearts have knowledge of the truth and those who are ignorant of it. By describing the ignorant of the truth as blind, it hints that those who have knowledge of the truth are seeing, as mentioned in the aforementioned verse: *Say, 'Are the blind one and the seer equal?* (13:16). Knowledge of the truth is a form of insight, while ignorance of it is akin to blindness; and with discernment comes being receptive to admonition, which is why it is considered a unique characteristic of those who possess knowledge of the truth, as stated in the verse: *Only those who possess intellect take admonition*.

When God says, *Only those who possess intellect take admonition*, this serves as a rationale for the preceding verse: *Is someone who knows …*, implying that these two groups cannot be equal because the knowledgeable are receptive to admonition, which the ignorant and blind are not. Furthermore, the term *those with intellect* is used in place of 'those with knowledge,' highlighting yet another point that supports the argument that the two groups are not equal because one group is receptive to admonition, while the other is not. This receptivity is exclusive to them because they have intellect and hearts, which others lack.

الَّذِينَ يُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ وَلاَ يَنقُضُونَ الْمِيثَاقَ ﴿٢٠﴾

(13:20)—those who fulfill Allah's covenant and do not break the pledge solemnly made,

It appears that this statement is an explanatory addition to the previous one, meaning that the pledge they do not break is God's covenant, which they fulfill. This covenant and pledge, combined with their receptivity to admonition mentioned in the previous verse, means they have committed to their Lord by accepting the natural law of recognizing God as the One and engaging in actions in accordance with the moral implications of His oneness.

The covenants and pledges established through the prophets and messengers, as ordered by God and according to the rules and laws, all originate from the covenant of natural law, as religion is based on natural law.

وَالَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَن يُوصَلَ وَيَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ وَيَخَافُونَ سُوءَ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٢١﴾

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(13:21) and those who join what Allah has commanded to be joined, and fear their Lord, and are afraid of an adverse reckoning—

The apparent meaning here is that what is being ordered refers to the legislative commandment revealed through scripture, as evidenced by the subsequent phrase, *and are afraid of an adverse reckoning*. This is because the reckoning is meant to be based on the rules revealed in the scripture, even if they are known by natural disposition, such as the moral repugnance of oppression and the goodness of justice. If an oppressed individual is ignorant of God's decree and is not culpable, they will not be held accountable for it in the same way as others. We have already established in earlier discussions that a person is not held accountable solely on the basis of their natural cognition, unless the guidance of divine revelation is also made available to them. God says, *so that mankind may not have any argument against Allah* (4:165).

This verse is fundamentally about maintaining all relationships that God commands us to maintain, with one of the most prominent examples being the bond of kinship that God has ordered us to uphold and emphasized the obligation of maintaining. God says, *Be wary of Allah, in whose Name you adjure one another, and the wombs* (4:1).

God's statement, *and fear their Lord* (yakhshawn)*, and are afraid* (yukhāfūn) *of an adverse reckoning*, emphasizes the moral duty to maintain the bonds that God has ordered to be kept. It indicates that neglecting these bonds is considered an act of disobedience against God's commandments, therefore one should fear Him, as this act of disobedience will be recorded as a bad deed in one's record of deeds that they should fear in the final reckoning.

The apparent difference between *khawf* and *khashya*, both of which

are translated as fear in this verse, is that *khashiya* (reverential fear) is the heart's reaction to the prospect of evil or something similar, while *khawf* causes action to be taken, meaning that taking precautions against the apprehended harm is more important than the heart's affectation. God said of His prophets: *and fear* (yakhshawn) *no one except Allah* (33:39), thus negating fear for anyone but Him, even though the prophets feeling fear toward others has been established in various verses such as: *Then Moses felt a fear within his heart* (20:67), and *And if you fear treachery from a people, break off with them in a like manner* (8:58).

Perhaps, then, the difference between fear and reverential fear is as al-Rāghib has mentioned, that *khashya* is stronger than fear because it is a fear accompanied by awe that has its roots in knowledge. This is supported by God's statement, *Only those of Allah's servants having knowledge fear Him* (35:28). The same is true of what some of them have said, namely that *khawf* is always associated with something unpleasant, such as when someone fears an illness or a person, while *khashya* pertains to a degree before something unpleasant.

And if the distinction is not as we have posited, the contradiction would have been apparent. Some have said that the difference is not found in all cases of usage, but merely most of them, while others say there is no difference between *khawf* and *khashya*. However, this is refuted by what we have already said.

وَالَّذِينَ صَبَرُواْ ابْتِغَاء وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُواْ الصَّلاَةَ وَأَنفَقُواْ مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلاَنِيَةً وَيَدْرَؤُونَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ أُوْلَـئِكَ لَهُمْ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ ﴿٢٢﴾

(13:22)—those who are patient (*ṣabarū*) for the sake of their Lord's pleasure, maintain the prayer, and spend out of what We have provided them, secretly and openly, and repel evil with good. For such will be the outcome of the ultimate abode:

The term *ṣabr* here appears without any sort of qualification, which means that those being described here possess it in all of its forms and divisions, such as patience in times of hardship, patience in performing good deeds, and patience against committing sins. However, it is limited by the phrase, *for the sake of their Lord's pleasure*, meaning that they are doing

so with the intention of pleasing God. The patience for which they are praised arises from their response to God's call, based on their knowledge that the revelation they received is true, rather than any other reason that people might praise them with.

In summary, those who are patient in seeking the pleasure of their Lord, establish prayer and give in charity are distinguished by their firm response to the divine call. This devotion and belief in God are tied to their patience, which is praised in the face of adversity, in persisting in fulfilling one's moral duties, and refusing to sin. It is further exemplified by their ability to maintain the bonds that God has commanded, fearing Him, and dreading the unfavorable reckoning. Their persistence is not only a demonstration of their devotion but also an affirmation of their faith in God. Thus, the praised quality of patience is only laudable when it is for the sake of God, as the discourse focuses on the characteristics stemming from their response to and recognition of the truthfulness of what was sent down to them by God. Not every quality praised by people, even if it is not linked to their worship and faith in God, such as being patient during adversity due to personal pride or the desire to be praised beautifully, can be considered laudable, as the poet once said:

And whenever I find myself in danger,
I tell myself, 'Easy does it! You will either be praised or at peace!'

The phrase *for the sake of their Lord's pleasure* (ibtighā' wajh rabbihim) literally means 'seeking their Lord's countenance.' And countenance here refers to the direction or aspect attributed to God in relation to one's actions or the like. It is the direction in which the person's deeds become manifest and settle with God in the form of the eternal rewards that remain with Him. God has said, *and Allah—with Him is the best of rewards* (3:195), and, *but what is with Allah shall last* (16:96), and *Everything will perish except His countenance* (28:88).

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... *maintain the prayer* means they made it enduring, not neglecting it by disregarding its parts and conditions or by trivializing its importance. The mention of prayer and what follows it, in conjunction with patience, is a case of specifying a particular aspect within a general context, emphasizing its significance and elevating its status.

The phrase, *and spend out of what We have provided them, secretly and openly*, refers to all forms of spending, including the obligatory and non-obligatory. This verse is Meccan, and the obligation of alms (*zakāt*) had not yet been instituted at the time of its revelation. The specification of spending as '*secretly and openly*' indicates doing it in the best way possible. Some forms of charitable spending are best done in secret, while others are better when done publicly. A believer who acknowledges the truthfulness of God's revelations should fulfill each of its rights accordingly. Spending should be done in secret when it might lead to a show of vanity, ostentation, dishonor, or loss of dignity. On the other hand, it should be public if it encourages others toward acts of righteousness and promotes good deeds.

In the saying, *and repel evil with good*, the meaning is that, when encountering something evil, they counter it with an act of goodness that surpasses or equals it, thus repelling the evil. This notion is broader than just rectifying a bad deed they have done with a good one because good deeds erase bad ones, or repenting to their Lord, as one who repents from sin is like one who has no sin. It could also be the case of countering the bad deeds of others toward them, such as forgiving someone who wronged them or treating them kindly, or responding with good manners and a cheerful disposition to those who were cold to them. This might include addressing ignorant people with good sense, preventing hateful actions, or commanding what is right. All of this falls under repelling evil with good, and there is no indication from the linguistic perspective that restricts the meaning to specific aspects.

Note the varied forms of expression the verse uses to describe the 'possessors of intellect' (*ūlū al-albāb*):

Those who fulfill (yūfūn) ... *and do not break* (lā yanqiḍūn) ... *and those who join* (yaṣilūn) ... *and fear* (yakhshawn) ... *and are afraid* (yukhāfūn) ... *who are patient* (ṣabarū) ... *maintain* (aqāmū) ... *and spend* (anfaqū) ... *and repel* (yadra'ūn) ...

Six of these attributes are expressed using verbs in the present tense, while three are expressed using verbs in the past tense.

According to some commentators, the part of the passage that reads: *those who are patient for the sake of their Lord's pleasure, maintain the prayer, and spend out of what We have provided them* (13:22), uses the past tense for these qualities while the remainder of it uses the present tense merely for eloquence and variation in speech. This is because all these verbs are in relation to the relative pronoun 'those who,' and since the conjunction and the relative pronoun convey the meaning of a conditional clause, both the past and present tenses convey the same meaning in such clauses. Whether you say *in ḍarabta ḍarabtu* ('if you hit, I hit,' using the past tense verbs) or *in taḍrib aḍrib* ('if you hit, I will hit,' present tense), in both cases, the meaning is one and the same. Therefore, in the clause with the relative pronoun, whether you use the past tense or the present tense, both convey the same meaning.

This is why the grammarians argue that when the past tense is used as a connector or attribute for an indefinite noun, it can imply that the action is meant either for the past or for the future. An example of the first case is *Those to whom the people said* (alladhīna qāla la-hum al-nās) (3:173) and an example of the second case is *excepting those who repent* (alladhīna tābū) *before you capture them, and know that Allah is all-forgiving, all-merciful* (5:34).

However, the problem with this explanation is that just because you have removed the specificity of an action's time in the past or future within the conditional phrase or something similar, does not mean you have removed the implications of the respective times, such as the occurrence of the event in the past or its continuation in the present. For instance, the past tense focuses on occurrence even if the time is disregarded. As such, the question of the different expressions in the context is justified.

Other commentators discuss the meaning behind these attributes, stating that those who fulfill their covenants, join, fear, and are afraid should persevere and continue in their actions. However, since patience is one of the qualities that is contingent upon demonstrating these attributes, it is presented using the past tense, which emphasizes its occurrence, and the same is true for prayer and spending due to the importance of these actions.

However, the problem with this explanation is that other attributes, such as fulfilling God's covenant, which refers to faith in God by responding to the call of their innate nature, are not less important than patience, prayer, and spending in God's way. If the past tense was used to signify the importance of the action, then fulfilling God's covenant should have also been expressed in this form, just like patience, prayer, and spending.

What I believe, to the best of my knowledge, is that the overall message of the passage, *those who are patient for the sake of their Lord's pleasure, maintain the prayer, and spend out of what We have provided them, secretly and openly, and repel evil with good*, is intended to emphasize a single idea, namely the performance of good deeds, which involves fulfilling obligations, avoiding prohibitions, and making up for shortcomings by doing good deeds. Thus, the primary intention of this passage is the performance of good deeds, while repelling evil with good, as a means of compensating for any shortcomings in these deeds, is intended as a supplementary aspect, compensating for anything that is lacking.

It would have been possible to express all four of the verbs in the present tense as well— *those who are patient* (yaṣbirūn) *for the sake of their Lord's pleasure, maintain* (yuqīmūn) *the prayer, and spend* (yunfiqūn) *out of what We have provided them, secretly and openly, and repel evil with good*—However, this would not have conveyed the same nuance of primacy and supplementariness.

Therefore, to indicate that those who possess intellects are consistently engaged in patience and embody all aspects of patience, it is stated: *those who are patient for the sake of their Lord's pleasure*. Then, to convey their continuous vigilance in their actions, it is said: *and repel evil with good*, suggesting that they are so attentive to their deeds that if ever there's a lapse in their patience, prayers, or charitable acts, they promptly compensate for it and rectify it.

This focus is similar to that observed in the verse, *Indeed those who say, 'Our Lord is Allah!' and then remain steadfast, the angels descend upon them* (41:30), which indicates that the angels' descent upon them is contingent on their affirmation of 'Our Lord is Allah,' and their steadfastness, without the need for any continuity in this.

For such will be the outcome of the ultimate abode refers to the

praiseworthy and favorable outcome, as the true consequence of their deeds is indeed this.

Indeed, nothing in the universe—according to the innate nature and disposition upon which God Almighty has created it—ends up with anything other than an outcome that is suitable for itself and a source of happiness. A bad outcome, in reality, is nothing more than the negation of this true outcome; it means that such a person or thing, due to a flaw in it, has been left without a consequence, while God had, in fact, created it to reach such an outcome. And if they call a bad outcome an outcome, this is an example of figurative speech, otherwise, a bad outcome is, in reality, the absence of an outcome.

For this reason, the word '*outcome*' is mentioned in the verse without qualification—God does not say whether it is a good outcome or a bad one; He only says that the outcome belongs to them. Now, if the outcome had two types, one good and one bad, it would have been better to say: 'the good outcome is for them.' So, it becomes clear that the outcome is the same as the praiseworthy outcome. Therefore, in the verses that are opposite to these verses and addressing the situation of the disbelievers, He never says: *for them is the outcome of the ultimate abode*, but rather He says: *and for them will be the ills of the abode*. From this point, it is understood that the meaning of the abode is this worldly abode, and the meaning of the worldly abode is the life of this world. Thus, *the outcome of the ultimate abode* means the final outcome of worldly life.

جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ
وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ يَدْخُلُونَ عَلَيْهِم مِّن كُلِّ بَابٍ ﴿٢٣﴾

(13:23) the Gardens of Eden (*'Adn*), which they will enter along with whoever is righteous from among their forebears, their spouses, and their descendants, and the angels will call on them from every door:

The word *'Adn* means a place of settlement, and when it is said that so-and-so has established himself in such a place (*fulān 'adana bi makāni kadhā*), it means that he has found a permanent dwelling there. Earthly jewels and metals are called *ma'ādin* in this sense because the gems are

permanently settled in them. Therefore, 'Gardens of Eden' refers to gardens that have a kind of stability, eternity, safety, and protection from every aspect.

The phrase 'Gardens of Eden' is connected in meaning to the phrase 'the ultimate abode,' implying that the ultimate abode is the Garden of Eden and eternal life therein. Consequently, this earthly life, by the very nature with which God has endowed it, is nothing more than a single life whose beginnings are filled with pain and suffering, but whose end is marked by ease, blessings, and safety. In other words, eternal life begins with the worldly life and ends with the afterlife, and this is the reality that God narrates through the words of the people of Paradise: *All praise belongs to Allah, who has fulfilled His promise to us and made us heirs to the earth, that we may settle in paradise wherever we may wish!* (39:74).

The verse under discussion corresponds to the verse *and those who join what Allah has commanded to be joined* (13:21), and it describes the ultimate consequence of this virtue of upholding family ties, which the possessors of intellects have observed in their lives. It promises them that they will soon be reunited with their righteous kin—including parents, offspring, siblings, and others.

Even though the phrase, *their forebears, their spouses, and their descendants*, does not explicitly mention mothers, it includes all the individuals listed above, since mothers are the wives of fathers and are thus covered by the word 'spouses.' Brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, and their children are all part of the fathers' lineage, which is encompassed by the term 'forebears'. This verse contains a subtle and concise expression.

سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُم بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ ﴿٢٤﴾

(13:24) 'Peace be to you, for your patience. How excellent is the outcome of the abode!'

This outcome is the culmination of their righteous deeds, which they continually uphold in every aspect of their lives. Whenever others deviate, these individuals remain steadfast, obedient to God, and avoid sins. They endure hardships, and their patience is accompanied by fear and awe of the Divine.

'Peace be to you, for your patience. How excellent is the outcome of the abode!' is the angels' message to the wise, who are reassured of everlasting security, peace, and good fortune—an outcome that will never be tainted by ugliness or blame.

وَالَّذِينَ يَنقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِن بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَن يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الأَرْضِ أُوْلَئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوءُ الدَّارِ ﴿٢٥﴾

(13:25) But as for those who break Allah's compact after having pledged it solemnly, and sever what Allah has commanded to be joined, and cause corruption in the earth—it is such on whom the curse will lie, and for them will be the ills of the abode.

This verse describes the state of unbelievers in contrast to believers. The phrase *and cause corruption in the earth* here is juxtaposed with the qualities mentioned earlier about the faithful, who fulfill their covenant with God and maintain their ties. This indicates that righteous deeds are the only factor that leads to the reformation of the earth and the development and prosperity of human societies, a development that ultimately results in the happiness of the human species and the growth of human communities. We discussed this meaning in our treatment of the general proofs of prophethood (*al-nubuwwa al-ʿāmma*).

At the end of the verse under discussion, God Almighty highlights the consequences of the actions of those who break their covenant, and the outcome of their deeds, saying: *it is such on whom the curse* (al-laʿna) *will lie, and for them will be the ills of the abode*. The term *laʿna* here means to be distanced from God's mercy and driven away from His grace. They are turned away from God's mercy and grace only because they have disregarded the truth and delved into falsehood, as the ultimate outcome of falsehood is nothing but destruction and ruin.

اللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاء وَيَقْدِرُ وَفَرِحُواْ بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا فِي الآخِرَةِ إِلاَّ مَتَاعٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

(13:26) Allah expands the provision for whomever He wishes, and tightens it. They exult in the life of this world, but compared

> with the Hereafter the life of this world is but a (trifling) enjoyment.

This verse serves to remind us that the rewards of these two groups (the praiseworthy end and eternal paradise of the possessors of intellect and the curse and hell for the ones who break God's covenant) are, in themselves, a type of provision that God Almighty bestows upon whomever and however He pleases, whether it be the reward of the former or the latter, without any obligation or restriction on His part.

This verse also reminds us that God's actions are in accordance with the cosmic order He has established for truth and falsehood and that they are continuously in operation. Indeed, the belief in the truth and acting upon it results in acquiring provisions from paradise and attaining eternal salvation, while believing in falsehood and acting upon it leads to curse, hell, and a miserable existence.

Regarding the phrase, *but compared with the Hereafter the life of this world is but an enjoyment*—considering the context of the verse, the intended meaning of this is that the true provision is, in fact, the provision of the Hereafter. However, the covenant-breakers, due to their attachment to the apparent life of this world and its adornments, have become oblivious of the life and provisions of the Hereafter, and instead have placed their trust in this worldly life, consequently being content with its possessions. Yet, the life of this world is merely a means and is not an ultimate goal in itself. It should be utilized for the sake of the other life.

Taking this into account, if we compare the life of this world with that of the Hereafter, considering the sum of the two, it is appropriate to view the former as a superior and primary consideration when our goal is to obtain the provisions of the eternal life and utilize worldly life as a means to attain that end. If, on the contrary, worldly life becomes an isolated aim in itself, it will be among the manifestations of falsehood that vanish like a riverbed upon drying up and provides no benefit, as stated in another verse: "(And this worldly life is nothing but amusement and play, and indeed, the home of the Hereafter is the true life if only they knew.)"

Examining Narrations

(1) In *al-Iḥtijāj*, al-Ṭabrisī narrates a tradition from the Commander

of the Faithful about the condition of the disbelievers in relation to the following verse: *As for the scum, it leaves as dross, and that which profits the people remains in the earth.* (13:17). It reads: 'The scum here represents the statements made by heretics (*mulḥidīn*) about the Qur'an. These statements, when analyzed and scrutinized, prove to be false and perishable. On the other hand, the speech that benefits people is divine revelation (*tanzīl*), which cannot be approached by falsehood from any direction, whether at the time of its descent or at a future time thereafter. The human heart accepts and embraces this revelation. In this context, the word "earth" refers to the human heart, which is the abode of knowledge and wisdom.'

Author's comment: The meaning of *tanzīl* here is to convey the true message of God's words. The statements made by the heretics about the Qur'an refer to the explanations they produce based on their own opinions. Some of these explanations, as Imām 'Alī stated, are indeed false. The verse in question is general and encompasses all falsehoods, as previously mentioned.

(2) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Suyūṭī narrates that Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and Abū al-Shaykh reported from Qatāda, who said, while interpreting the verse *those who fulfill Allah's covenant and do not break the pledge solemnly made* (13:20), that Qatāda said: 'You must fulfill the covenant and not break the pledge, for God has forbidden it and warned about it in the strongest terms. The Qur'an mentions this point in about twenty different places as advice for your benefit, and He has made it an argument against you should you disregard it. Those who possess understanding, reason, and knowledge realize that the greatness of anything is in proportion to the greatness bestowed upon it by God. The Messenger of God (peace be upon him) was reported to have said in his sermon: "There is no faith for whoever is not trustworthy, and there is no religion for whoever does not adhere to his covenant."'

Author's comment: Based on the apparent meaning of this narration, it is evident that Qatāda has associated the terms covenant (*'ahd*) and pledge (*mīthāq*) with the agreements that exist among people. However, as the discerning reader may have already noted, the apparent context of

the verse under discussion contradicts this explanation.

(3) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates from ʿUmar b. Yazīd, who said: 'I asked Imām al-Ṣādiq about the meaning of the words of God, the Almighty and Sublime, when He said, *and those who join what Allah has commanded to be joined* (13:21). He replied, "It refers to your relatives."

(4) In the same source, with another chain of narration from him, it is narrated that he said: 'I asked Imām Sadiq about the verse, *and those who join what Allah has commanded to be joined*. He said: 'This verse was revealed about the relatives of the Family of Muḥammad, but it can also encompass your kin as well.' Then he said, 'Do not be one of those who say that such and such a verse has been revealed only for such and such a matter.'

Author's comment: The meaning is that when the verses of the Qur'an have a general meaning, they should not be confined to a single meaning, as the Qur'an has an outward and inward aspect, and God, the Exalted, has made the love and affection of the near relatives of His Messenger, which is one of the instances of maintaining kinship, as the reward and compensation of his mission and said, *Say: 'I do not ask of you any reward for it except the love for my near relatives'* (42:23). In addition, the following narration also implies the same meaning.

(5) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from ʿUmar b. Maryam, who said: 'I asked Imām al-Ṣādiq about the verse, *and those who join what Allah has commanded to be joined* (13:21). He replied, 'One of its meanings is maintaining kinship, but the highest degree and the best instances of it is to maintain a connection with us.'

(6) In the same source, it is narrated from Muḥammad b. Fuḍayl who said: 'I heard Imām al-Kāẓim say about the verse *and those who join what Allah has commanded to be joined* (13:21): 'It refers to the womb of the Family of Muḥammad, which is suspended from the Throne, and it says, 'O Lord! Establish bond with the one who establishes bond with me and sever with the one who severs with me.' And this verse applies to all wombs.'

Author's comment: There are other narrations in this regard, and we have explained and elaborated on the meaning that the womb of the Family of Muḥammad is suspended from the Throne in our commentary on the

early verses of Sūrah al-Nisā'.

(7) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī reports via his chain of narrators from Sumaʿa b. Mihrān from Imām al-Ṣādiq, that he said: 'Among the things that God Almighty has made obligatory in addition to giving alms on one's wealth is upholding bonds of kinship, as He has said: *and those who join what Allah has commanded to be joined*.'

Author's comment: al-'Ayyāshī has also mentioned this narration in his own commentary.

(8) In *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, it is reported from Ḥammād b. 'Uthmān from Imām al-Ṣādiq that he said to a man: 'O, so-and-so! What transpired between you and your brother?' He replied: 'May I be your ransom! I had a right over him, and I wanted to take my due from him.' The Imām said: 'Tell me, what is the meaning of the verse *and are afraid of an adverse reckoning*? Is it that they fear that God may do injustice to them? No, by God, rather they fear that their accounts will be scrutinized carefully.'

Author's comment: Shaykh al-Ṣadūq narrates this in *Maʿānī al-akhbār*, as does al-Qummī in his *Tafsīr*.

(9) In the same source, it is reported from Hishām b. Sālim, from Imām al-Ṣādiq, concerning the verse, *and are afraid of an adverse reckoning*, he said: 'An adverse recknoning is the same as nitpicking and fault-finding.' He also said: 'Its meaning is to count a person's sins rather than their good deeds.'

Author's comment: A continuation of this narration has been narrated through different channels from the Imām. The meaning of not counting the good deeds is that they have been rendered flawed and deficient due to nitpicking, making them unworthy of consideration. The following narration supports this meaning.

(10) In the same source, it is reported from Hishām that the Imām said about the same verse: 'Their sins are counted, but their good deeds are not counted, and this is the meaning of an adverse reckoning.'

(11) In the same book, it is reported from Jābir, from Imām al-Bāqir that he said: 'The Messenger of God said: "Kindness to parents and upholding kinship makes the accounting on the Day of Resurrection easier." Then he recited the verse: *and those who join what Allah has commanded to be joined, and fear their Lord,*

and are afraid of an adverse reckoning.

(12) And in *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, concerning the phrase *the Gardens of Eden* (13:23), it is reported from Ibn Mardawayh that ʿAlī said: ʿThe Messenger of God said: "The Garden of Eden is a great tree that God planted with His own hand and told it: 'Be,' and it was."'

(13) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī transmits via a chain of narration from ʿAmr b. Shimr al-Yamānī narrates via an incomplete chain from ʿAlī, that he said: ʿThe Messenger of God said: "Patience consists of three types: patience during suffering, patience in obedience, and patience against disobedience. Whoever is patient during suffering until they overcome it with a good consolation, God will record for them three hundred degrees, with the distance between each degree being the distance between the heavens and the earth. Whoever is patient in obedience, God will record for them six hundred degrees, with the distance between each degree being the distance between the boundaries of the earth and the throne. Whoever is patient against disobedience, God will record for them nine hundred degrees, with the distance between each degree being the distance between the boundaries of the earth and the end of the Throne."'

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Verses 27–35

Once again, the discussion turns to the disbelievers, who said: *'Why has not some sign been sent down to him from his Lord?'* meaning, why has no sign been revealed to him from his Lord so that we may see it, be guided by it, and turn from worshipping ours idols to the true faith? God responds that guidance and misguidance are not dependent on signs, but rather on God Himself. It is God who guides whomever He wishes and misguides whomever He wishes.

This is because the Divine modus has been to guide those who turn to Him with hearts that find peace and reassurance in His remembrance. These are the ones who ultimately find lasting happiness and enjoy the outcome of the abode. But He misguides those who persistently reject and defy His clear signs, for they face punishment in this world, with an even harsher punishment in the hereafter, and they have no protector other than God.

If guidance were possible without His will, what could be more effective than a miraculous sign like the Qur'an? Yet, as we can see, even with such a clear miracle, some people remain unguided. This is the best evidence that guidance is in the hands of God, and He has chosen not to guide some people whose fate has been sealed for misguidance. He Himself has stated: *Whomever Allah leads astray has no guide* (7:186). Therefore, those whom God has led astray due to disbelief and deception cannot be guided.

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ لَوْلاَ أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ قُلْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُضِلُّ مَن يَشَاء وَيَهْدِى إِلَيْهِ مَنْ أَنَابَ ﴿٢٧﴾

(13:27) The faithless say, 'Why has not some sign been sent down to him from his Lord?' Say, 'Indeed Allah leads astray whomever He wishes, and guides to Himself (*yahdī ilay-hi*) those who turn penitently—

The disbelievers' argument is revisited here and addressed. The reason why they said, *'Why has not some sign been sent down to him from his Lord?'*

was to show that they do not consider the Qur'an that was sent down to the Prophet a sign, because if it was a sign from God, they would have followed it and been guided.

The evidence for understanding their intentions thus can be found in the subsequent verses. For example, immediately after this God, tells the Prophet: *Say, 'Indeed Allah leads astray whomever He wishes...*'; Then, He says: *If only it were a Qur'an whereby the mountains could be moved, or the earth could be toured, or the dead could be spoken to ... Rather all dispensation belongs to Allah* (13:31); And: *... and they have been barred from the way ...* (13:33).

Hence, God responds to them by telling the Prophet to answer: *Say, 'Indeed Allah leads astray whomever He wishes, and guides to Himself those who turn penitently...*' From this, it is understood that the issue of guidance is not connected to a revealed sign, as if they would definitely be guided if a sign were sent down and only misguided if it were not. Rather, guidance and misguidance are dependent on God, who guides or misguides as He pleases.

However, because this could be read as suggesting that guidance and misguidance revolve around an arbitrary and inscrutable divine will, God clarified the meaning of this by saying, '*and guides to Himself those who turn penitently*' instead of 'and guides to Himself whoever He wills.' In other words, He guides to Himself anyone who turns back to Him, and from this, it becomes clear that the basis for this divine guidance is the divine will, which follows a consistent modus operandi and conforms to a flawless, perfect system. Indeed, God desires to guide those who turn back to Him, and His will is to lead astray those who turn away from Him and do not return.

Therefore, if one possesses the qualities of repentance and seeking the truth, and their thoughts and beliefs are not bound by the shackles of their desires, God will guide them through this true invitation (the Qur'an), while those whose thoughts and beliefs are not free from the bondage of desires become misguided, even if the verses are clear and straightforward—in fact they will not benefit from any signs, even if they are miraculous. Indeed, *neither signs nor warnings avail a people who have no faith* (10:101).

From this, it can be deduced that the phrase, *Allah leads astray whomever He wishes*, is to be understood as: 'God leads astray, by His will, those

who do not turn to Him and guides to Himself, by His will, those who turn to Him.

Moreover, this explanation clarifies that the referent of the pronoun *ilay-hi* ('to Himself') in the phrase *He guides to Himself* (yahdī ilay-hi) is indeed God. It is incorrect, as some have suggested, that it refers to the Qur'an, and equally unfounded is the notion put forward by others that it refers to the Messenger of God.

الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُم بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلاَ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ﴿٢٨﴾

> (13:28)—those who have faith, and whose hearts find rest (*taṭma'innu*) in the remembrance of Allah.' Look! The hearts find assurance in Allah's remembrance!

Itmi'nān here means tranquility and peace. One finds assurance in something when one is reconciled to it.

From the context, it is apparent that the beginning of the verse serves to explain the reason behind latter part of the previous verse, meaning that the act of repentance is synonymous with faith and the assurance of one's heart through the remembrance of God. This assurance, from the believer's perspective, prepares and disposes them for receiving divine attention and gifts, just as wickedness and turning away from the truth create the necessary circumstances for divine misguidance. As such, God says, *and He leads no one astray thereby except the transgressors* (2:26), and He also says, *So when they swerved Allah made their hearts swerve, and Allah does not guide the transgressing lot* (61:5).

Belief or faith in God is not simply knowing and understanding that God is real, for mere knowledge and comprehension is not synonymous with faith. Rather, such knowledge can coexist with arrogance and denial, as God has said Himself: *They impugned them—though they were convinced in their hearts—wrongfully and defiantly* (27:14). Since we know that faith does not coincide with denial, we conclude that faith is not mere cognition or assent, but rather a specific acceptance and acknowledgment by the soul of what it has understood. This acceptance causes the soul to submit to the recognition and the consequences it entails, and the sign of having such acceptance is that all the faculties and limbs of a person also accept and submit to it.

Here, we observe that many people, despite recognizing the repulsiveness and immorality of certain actions, find themselves addicted and unable to refrain. This occurs because they only intellectually grasp the action's ugliness without truly internalizing it. Consequently, they fail to adhere to their own understanding. In contrast, there are those who not only understand the vile nature of such actions but also fully embrace this understanding. Once they commit to this realization, abandoning the act becomes significantly easier—this embodies the essence of faith.

This is the meaning that is derived from the noble verse: '*Whomever Allah desires to guide, He opens his breast to Islam, and whomever He desires to lead astray, He makes his breast narrow and straitened as if he were climbing to a height* (6:125).

Hence, guidance from God necessarily concerns an aspect within a person's heart, or breast, or soul that relates to accepting and responding passively to the accepted matter. In the verse quoted from Sūrah al-Anʿām above, this is expressed as the expansion of the chest and widening of the heart, while in the verse at hand, it is referred to as faith and assurance in the heart. This means that a person should view themselves as accepting the matter and be secure in their acknowledgment, so their heart finds tranquility and serenity with it, allowing that matter to find a place in their heart and be fixed within, without the heart becoming troubled or turning away.

Based on the above, it is evident that the statement, *and whose hearts find assurance in the remembrance of Allah*, is an explanatory clause to the statement, *those who have faith*. Therefore, having faith in God necessarily involves the heart finding assurance in the remembrance of God.

This does not contradict what has been said in the verse, *The faithful are only those whose hearts tremble when Allah is mentioned* (8:2). The fear described here is an emotional state that comes before the assurance mentioned in the verse presently under discussion. This is further indicated by the verse, *Allah has sent down the best of discourses, a scripture of similar motifs, whereat quiver the skins of those who fear their Lord, then their skins and hearts soften to Allah's remembrance. That is Allah's guidance, by which He guides whomever He wishes* (39:23).

This is because whatever comes from Him, the Exalted, is a blessing, whereas an adversity, whatever form it might take, is in essence a withholding of the bestowal of such a blessing or of the sending down of a

mercy, rather than an actual affirmative act emanating from Him. This is supported by the verse, *Whatever mercy Allah unfolds for the people, no one can withhold it; and whatever He withholds no one can release it after Him* (35:2).

If fear and awe only arise because one expects evil to come to them, and there is no evil with Him, the Exalted, then the true fear of God is, in actuality, a person's fear of their own bad deeds that cause divine mercy to be withheld from them and God's abundant goodness to be cut off from them. When the human soul is reminded of God the Exalted, the first thing it turns to is the shortcomings and deficiencies by which it is surrounded, causing the person's skin to shiver and their heart to tremble with fear. Then, the soul turns to its Lord, who is the ultimate goal of its innate desire, and finds tranquility and reassurance in His remembrance.

In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī writes: 'God has described the believer here as someone whose heart finds solace in the remembrance of Him. In another context, God mentions that hearts shudder (or tremble) at the mention of His name. This is because the purpose of remembrance in the first case is to recall the rewards and blessings of God, which are innumerable, and to which there is no limit or end for anyone. When a person remembers God's blessings, their heart becomes at ease. The purpose of remembrance in the second instance, which causes fear and anxiety, is to recall God's punishment and vengeance, which, upon remembering, deprives one of their peace.'

However, this reading fits better with the view of someone who understands the term 'remembrance' (*dhikr*) to mean the Qur'an, as it appears in several instances in the Qur'an. For example, it says, *This is a blessed reminder which We have sent down* (21:50) and also, *Indeed We have sent down the Reminder, and indeed We will preserve it* (15:9), and other similar verses besides these.

However, it appears that the intended meaning of 'remembrance' encompasses verbal recitation and, more broadly, the act of focusing one's thoughts and engaging one's heart, whether this involves contemplating a sign, coming across an argument, or hearing a particular claim. After stating, *those who have faith, and whose hearts find assurance in the remembrance of Allah*, the Qur'an then invokes a universal principle by saying, *Look! The hearts find assurance in Allah's remembrance!*, which posits a

universal rule that includes all aspects of remembrance, whether verbal or otherwise, and whether it refers to the Qur'an or not.

In the statement, *Look! The hearts find assurance in Allah's remembrance!*, there is a reminder for people to be conscious of their Creator and to find solace in His remembrance, for a person's only aim in life is salvation, happiness, and blessings, and their only fear is the sudden occurrence of misery and punishment. The only factor controlling happiness, misery, blessings, and punishment is God Himself, as all affairs are ultimately dependent on Him. He is the sovereign Lord and subjugator of His creation, acting as He wishes and being the protector and refuge of the believers. Therefore, remembering God offers a sense of relief and tranquility for a soul that is a prisoner of life's trials, constantly in search of a reliable anchor to guarantee its happiness, and for a soul that is uncertain of its own path, not knowing where it is headed or what its purpose is, much like an antidote providing comfort and calmness to a bitten person. Just as the bitten person relies on and trusts the antidote, using it to alleviate their pain and restore their health, so too does the soul find comfort in the remembrance of God.

Thus, every heart, in the collective sense indicated by the Arabic word *al-qulūb* ('the hearts'), finds tranquility and relief from anxiety through the remembrance of God. Indeed, this is a general rule that applies to all hearts, except for those that have degenerated to such an extent that they can no longer be called hearts due to the loss of their insight and growth. Such hearts will avoid the remembrance of God and will be deprived of the blessings of tranquility and peace, as stated: *Indeed it is not the eyes that turn blind, but the hearts turn blind—those that are in the breasts!*, and also: *they have hearts with which they do not understand,*, and also: *They have forgotten Allah, so He has forgotten them* (9:67).

From the wording of the verse under discussion, it appears that a meaning of exclusivity is intended, as the object of the verb, meaning *in Allah's remembrance* comes before the verb, *find assurance* (Arabic: alā bi dhikr Allāh taṭma'innu al-qulūb). Consequently, it indicates that the hearts find tranquility and peace only through remembering God and not through anything else. Our previous explanation also clarifies this point, as we said that the ultimate purpose of human hearts, which are the seat of consciousness (*al-nafs al-mudrika*), is to attain happiness and safety

from misery. They strive for this end though various means, but since every means is dominant over others in one way and dominated by others in another, only the sublime, self-sufficient, and all-compassionate God can represent the means that are solely dominant and undominated by anything else. Therefore, it is only through remembering God that human hearts can find tranquility, and if a heart finds peace in remembering anything other than God, it is a heart that is oblivious to its true state; if it were to become aware of its condition, it would, without delay, succumb to trembling and anxiety.

As for the various explanations put forth by some commentators concerning the verse *—those who have faith, and whose hearts find assurance in the remembrance of Allah*, one reading is that this verse is a new statement (*isti'nāf*), which is independent in its meaning from the preceding verse. According to this view, the phrase *those who have faith*, becomes the subject, and the clause, *happy are they and good is their destination* (13:29) in the subsequent verse is the predicate. Meanwhile, the clause '*Those who have faith and do righteous deeds* is considered a permutation for the original clause, and the clause '*Look! The hearts find assurance in Allah's remembrance!* is an interpolation (*jumla mu'tariḍa*) placed between the subject and predicate of a complete sentence. However, this reading is tortuous and does not fit the context of the verse.

الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ الصَّالِحَاتِ طُوبَى لَهُمْ وَحُسْنُ مَآبٍ ﴿٢٩﴾

(13:29) Those who have faith and do righteous deeds—happy are they (*ṭūbā la-hum*) and good is their destination (*ḥusn ma'āb*).

The word *ṭūbā* is a noun on the comparative pattern of *fu'lā*, being the feminine form of *aṭyab* (from *ṭayyib*), literally meaning 'more pure' or 'more virtuous.' *Ṭūbā* is an adjective for an implicit noun which, as it appears from the context, carries the meaning of 'life' or 'livelihood'. For any blessing, no matter what it might be, is deemed pleasant and enviable because it is a source of happiness in life. And it is only a source of happiness and contentment when it helps the heart finds tranquility and frees it from anxiety. Such peace and tranquility are only attainable by those who believe in God and perform righteous deeds. Thus, it is only God who provides a reason for inner peace and happiness in life.

Indeed, such a person is protected from evil and loss in whatever lies ahead, and how could it be otherwise when they have leaned on a pillar that cannot be destroyed? They have placed themselves under the protection of Almighty God—whatever is destined for them is a source of their happiness. If they are granted something, it is for their good, and if something is withheld, it is still for their good.

God Himself has described this virtuous life as follows: *Whoever acts righteously,* (*whether*) *male or female, should he be faithful,—We shall revive him with a good life and pay them their reward by the best of what they used to do* (16:97) And in describing those who do not find inner peace through the remembrance of God, He has said: *But whoever disregards My remembrance, his shall be a wretched life, and on the Day of Resurrection We shall raise him blind* (20:124).

It is not unlikely that in the verse under discussion, the life and livelihood of the believers is referred to as being 'more pure,' such that a greater degree of purity is attributed to them, to suggest that life is not entirely devoid of purity. What exists is that for those who remember God and possess inner peace, their life has greater purity, as their life is removed from the contamination of unpleasant experiences.

Based on this, the phrase *ṭūbā la-hum* means: 'For them is a life, or a livelihood, that is more virtuous—meaning that for them is a life or a livelihood that is more pure.' Thus, the word *ṭūbā* is the subject and the word *la-hum* is the predicate. If the subject in the indefinite form is placed prior to the predicate, which is the prepositional phrase *la-hum* (translated as 'are they'), it is because the context of the speech was congratulatory. In such a situation, the cause of congratulations is brought forward to be mentioned more immediately, in order that the listener becomes happy as soon as possible. Similarly, in glad tidings, instead of saying 'the good news is for you' (*la-kum bushrā*) it is said: 'Good news for you' (*bushrā la-kum*).

In short, the verse under discussion promises those who believe in God and perform righteous deeds, and as a result, attain lasting peace of heart through the remembrance of God, a life of goodness and a felicitous outcome. Moreover, it becomes clear how the verse connects to the previous verses. Indeed, as we have mentioned before, a good life is one of the effects of having a tranquil heart.

In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, under the phrase *ṭūbā la-hum*, al-Ṭabrisī states

that the meaning of this phrase has several explanations:

'The first explanation is that it signifies joy and delight for them, as narrated from Ibn 'Abbās.

The second explanation is that it means happiness and envy for them, as related by al-Ḍaḥḥāk.

The third explanation is that it implies goodness and honor for them, as reported from Ibrāhīm al-Nakhā'ī.

The fourth explanation is that it indicates paradise for them, as conveyed by Mujāhid.

The fifth explanation is that it denotes a pleasant life for them, as stated by al-Zajjāj and a desirable state for them, as mentioned by Ibn al-Anbārī because it is derived from the word for goodness—*ṭayyib*. It is also said that it means the best things will be for them, which refers to paradise, as related from al-Jubā'ī.

The sixth explanation is that it implies a pleasant life for them.

The seventh explanation is that it signifies goodness for them, as reported by Qatāda.

The eighth explanation is that it means what a blessing they have, as narrated by 'Ikrima.

The ninth explanation is that it stands for a continuous state of goodness and blessings for them.

The tenth explanation is that *ṭūbā* is the name of a tree in Paradise, the roots of which are in the abode of the Prophet and the branches of which extend into the homes of each and every believer. This is reported by 'Ubayd b. 'Umayr, Wahb, Abū Hurayra, Shahr b. Ḥawshab, and it is also narrated by Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī as a saying traced back to the Prophet.'

Most of these meanings are derived by analogy rather than being understood from the apparent meaning of the verse.

كَذَٰلِكَ أَرْسَلْنَاكَ فِي أُمَّةٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِن قَبْلِهَا أُمَمٌ لِّتَتْلُوَ عَلَيْهِمُ الَّذِي
أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ بِالرَّحْمَٰنِ قُلْ هُوَ رَبِّي لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَلَيْهِ
تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ مَتَابِ ﴿٣٠﴾

(13:30) Thus (*kadhālik*) have We sent you to a nation before which many nations have passed away, that you may recite to them what We have revealed to you. Yet they defy the All-beneficent. Say,

> 'He is my Lord; there is no god except Him; in Him I have put my trust, and to Him will be my return (*matāb*).'

The word *matāb* is an infinitive derived from *tawba*, which means 'to return.' The demonstrative pronoun at the beginning of the verse, *kadhālik*, refers to what God has already mentioned in previous verses about the Divine modus of inviting all nations to the religion of monotheism, then misguiding whoever He wills and guiding whoever He wills according to the cosmic order that dictates that all things must return to God, as well as having faith in Him, hearts finding assurance in His remembrance, and not turning away from Him.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is as follows: 'We sent you to a nation before which other nations have passed away and perished, and we sent you in the same manner as we sent earlier messengers, according to the Divine modus that has always operated in the world. Your mission was to recite what We revealed to you upon your nation and to propagate the contents of this Book for them even though they disbelieve in the All-beneficent.

Note that in this verse God says, *Yet they defy the All-beneficent* rather than 'Yet they defy Us,' even though, at first glance, the context would seem to suggest the latter was more fitting. The reason for this is to indicate that their rejection of the revelation that the Messenger of God recites to them—which is the Qur'an—and their lack of attention to its ordinances and their objection to why a sign has not been sent down by their Lord to the Prophet, actually constitutes disbelief in the very principle of divine mercy, a mercy that if they accepted and acted upon it would result in their happiness in this world and the hereafter.

Say, 'He is my Lord; there is no god except Him; in Him I have put my trust, and to Him will be my return.' In this sentence, the Messenger is instructed to explicitly remind them of the principle of monotheism. God instructs him to tell them: 'He is my Lord; there is no other deity but Him; I place my trust only in Him and my return is only toward Him.' This means that He alone is my Lord without any partner, as opposed to what they believe, and only He has Lordship over me; I see that He alone looks after all my affairs and I ask for my needs only at His threshold.

From this, it becomes clear that having trust in God and considering the return to be only to Him are the logical consequences of believing in

God's Lordship and emanate from it, as the Lord means the owner and the one who governs the affairs of others. So, the meaning of this is: 'He is my trustee and to Him I shall return.'

Some have said that the meaning of the word *matāb* refers to repentance from one's sins, because if we take it in its primary meaning ('the place of return'), it would serve as emphasis for the phrase, *in Him I have put my trust*, but this contradicts the apparent meaning.

However, we do not accept that *matāb* simply serves as emphasis in this context, nor do we believe that emphasizing it contradicts its apparent meaning, as should be clear to the reader.

Others interpret *to Him will be my return* as implying 'both mine and your return is to Him,' suggesting a mutual return towards God for both the speaker and the audience. However, this meaning assumes an implicit meaning without any textual basis. Simply because the Messenger of God and his followers envision their return to God, it doesn't validate the assumption of such an implicit meaning in the absence of clear textual evidence.

وَلَوْ أَنَّ قُرْآنًا سُيِّرَتْ بِهِ الْجِبَالُ أَوْ قُطِّعَتْ بِهِ الأَرْضُ أَوْ كُلِّمَ بِهِ الْمَوْتَى
بَل لِّلَّهِ الأَمْرُ جَمِيعًا أَفَلَمْ يَيْأَسِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ أَن لَّوْ يَشَاء اللَّهُ لَهَدَى
النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَلاَ يَزَالُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ تُصِيبُهُم بِمَا صَنَعُواْ قَارِعَةٌ أَوْ
تَحُلُّ قَرِيبًا مِّن دَارِهِمْ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ وَعْدُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لاَ يُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ ﴿٣١﴾

(13:31) If only it were a Qur'an whereby the mountains could be moved (*suyyirat bi-hi al-jibāl*), or the earth could be cut (*quṭṭiʿat bi-hi al-arḍ*), or the dead could be spoken to (*kullima bi-hi al-mawtā*). Rather all dispensation belongs to Allah. Have not the faithful yet realized that had Allah wished He would have guided mankind all together? The faithless will continue to be visited by catastrophes because of their doings—or they will land near their habitations—until Allah's promise comes to pass. Indeed Allah does not break His promise.

To say that *mountains could be moved* by it (suyyirat bi-hi al-jibāl) means that they could be uprooted and transferred from one place to another, as for *the earth could be cut* by it (quṭṭiʿat bi-hi al-arḍ), this means

splitting the earth into pieces (*qiṭʿa qiṭʿa*), while *the dead could be spoken to* (kullima bi-hi al-mawtā) means they could be brought back to life, endowed with speech, and questioned about what happened to them after their death so that the listeners might grasp the reality of the hereafter thereby. This is because these were the demands of the disbelievers and the reason for which they were demanding divine signs.

These are wondrous and extraordinary matters that are posited as the effects of the Qur'an (and even if we assume that the Qur'an produced such effects, these disbelievers would not have been guided). The phrase, *If only it were a Qur'an* ... is a hypothetical conditional clause, whose antecedent is ... *Rather all dispensation belongs to Allah*. In other words, as we have already discussed in relation to these verses, God is saying that the matter of guidance does not depend on providing the disbelievers with the signs they demand—*'Why has not some sign been sent down to him from his Lord?'* (13:27)—but rather the matter of guidance and misguidance devolves solely to God. He misguides whomsoever He wishes, just as He has misguided them, and He guides to Himself those who turn to Him.

The subsequent verses follow in the same vein. For example, see:

Rather their scheming is presented as decorous to the faithless, and they have been barred from the way; and whomever Allah leads astray, has no guide (13:33); *Thus We have sent it down as a dispensation in Arabic; and should you follow their desires...* (13:37); ... and, *and a messenger may not bring a sign except by Allah's leave* (13:38).

As are the previous verses, which are all in this context and serve to expound the same meaning.

Therefore, as we have already mentioned, the antecedent for the hypothetical conditional clause, *If only it were a Qur'an whereby* ... is left implicit. Its meaning is akin to us saying: 'They would still; not be guided it unless God wishes.' Therefore, the meaning is: 'Even if we assume that the Qur'an had such an effect that it would uproot mountains, break the earth into pieces, and bring the dead to speak, they still would not be guided by seeing such wonders unless God wishes. The matter in its entirety is in the hands of God, and no one else has any say in it, so no one should think that if such a great, strange, and astonishing sign had been revealed, it would have been possible to guide these disbelievers with it. No, the entire matter is in the hands of God, and even guidance is completely dependent upon

His will, to which all matters ultimately return.'

Based on this, the meaning of this verse becomes similar to the verse, *And even if We had sent down to them angels and the dead spoke to them, and We gathered before them all things face to face, they would not believe unless God wills* (6:111).

Some have said that the implicit antecedent for *If only it were a Qur'an whereby ...* is along the lines of: 'It would be this Qur'an,' the purpose being to proclaim the greatness of the Qur'an: Namely that the Qur'an has the highest degree of power of expression and penetration of speech, and it is the ignorance of the disbelievers to turn away from the Qur'an and demand another miracle instead. What miracle is higher than this Qur'an that has reached such a level of dignity and greatness that, if any recitation were to have the power to uproot mountains or break the earth into pieces or make the dead speak, it would certainly be this very Qur'an. Yet, God has not revealed the Qur'an in this way.

Based on this understanding, the present verse would have had a similar meaning to the verse: *Had We sent down this Qur'an upon a mountain, you would have surely seen it humbled (and) go to pieces with the fear of Allah* (59:12).

However, this explanation is not consistent with the overall context of the verses that have already been discussed, especially the phrase: *Rather* (bal) *all dispensation belongs to Allah*, and also the subsequent phrase *Have not the faithful yet realized that had Allah wished He would have guided mankind all together?* The reasons for this inconsistency will be explained momentarily. Therefore, the commentators who have explained the verse in this way have had difficulties in showing how the phrase *Rather all dispensation belongs to Allah* fits into this and connects with what came before. For example:

Some have said that it means that if a Qur'an is hypothetically assumed to have such an effect, it would be this Qur'an, but God Almighty does not do such a thing with this Qur'an; instead, He has revealed it in the form that it is, because the dispensation of all things is in His hands and no one else's.

Others have said that the use of *bal* in *Rather* (bal) *all dispensation belongs to Allah ...* conveys the meaning that these kinds of extraordinary events are not performed with the Qur'an, and if they are done, they are done through another means that is under God's will, because all affairs

are in His hands and only His.

Yet others have said that it is preferable to read that the phrase in question, *Rather all dispensation belongs to Allah* as connected to an implicit phrase with the meaning: 'But the choice of any matter is not in your hands, *rather all dispensation belongs to Allah*.'

However, the esteemed reader can see for themselves that the context does not support any of these readings, and the correct understanding, which is consistent with the overall context, is that the clause '*rather* ...' should be understood as a rejection of the preceding conditional sentence and its implicit consequent. As we have said, the implied conditional sentence and its consequence would mean something like this: 'Even if a Qur'an were to be revealed that could displace mountains, fragment the earth, and make the dead speak, these people would not be guided unless God so willed.'

Have not the faithful yet realized (a fa-lam yay'asi) ***that had Allah wished He would have guided mankind all together?*** This sentence is a continuation of the previous discussion, and there are three opinions about its meaning:

First, some have stated that the word *yay'asi* is from Hawāzin dialect and means 'knowledge.' Others have said it belongs to the Ḥayy dialect of the Nakhʿ tribe. In support of this, they quote a verse from Suḥaym b. Wathīl al-Rabāḥī, a poet from the Nakhʿ tribe, who said:

'I say to them in the ravine when they captured me / Do you not know (*a lam tay'asū*) that I am the son of Fāris Zahdam?'

And they also quoted Rabāḥ b. ʿAdī:

'Do people not know (*a lam yay'asa*) that I am his son / even if I am far from the tribe's land?'

Based on this linguistic explanation, the verse emphasizes that when the means for guidance are unavailable, even if the Qur'an could move mountains and tear the earth apart, or make the dead speak, it still would not be able to guide them. Since the matter is entirely in God's hands, the believers should know that God has not willed the guidance of the unbelievers; had He willed it, He could have guided all people, both believers and unbelievers. But He did not guide the unbelievers, and as a result, they did not, nor will they ever, find the way.

Second, others have said that the word *yay'asi* is derived from *ya's*,

which means 'hopelessness,' but that the phrase *a fa-lam* (have not ... yet ...?) implicitly includes the notion of knowledge. The intention of this verse is to inform the believers that they must know that God does not will the guidance of the unbelievers; if He had so desired, He could have guided all people. Consequently, the believers must always be hopeless about unbelievers ever being guided.

Therefore, the ultimate meaning of the verse is: 'Have the believers not yet attained the knowledge that God has not willed the guidance of the unbelievers, and had He so willed, He could have guided all people?' And 'Have the believers not yet despaired of the guidance and faith of the unbelievers?' Then, for the sake of brevity, the meaning of knowledge has been implicitly included in the verb for despair, and only the conditional sentence—meaning 'if God wills, He would guide all people'—is connected to this verb.

Third, yet others have said that the sentence 'Do they not despair?' has its own literal meaning and does not convey any sense of knowledge, and the phrase 'if God wills' is not related to it, but rather belongs to the phrase 'the faithful.' However, the predicate of despair is left implicit, and the full meaning of the passage is as follows: 'Have not those who believe yet despaired that if God wills, He would guide all people to believe?' In other words: 'Have they not yet despaired of the disbelievers ever finding faith?'

These are the three possible meanings of the verse, and the middle one is the most appropriate from all aspects. In any case, the verse contains a subtle reference to the fact that the believers hoped that perhaps the disbelievers would come to believe, and perhaps their hope stemmed from the statement of the disbelievers who said: *'Why has not some sign been sent down to him from his Lord?,'* so they hoped in themselves that perhaps a sign in addition to the Qur'an would be revealed, as a result of which the disbelievers would come to believe, and thus they implored the Messenger of God to respond to the demand of the disbelievers. However, God, in the verse under discussion and in other verses of the Qur'an, made them despair of the disbelievers ever coming to believe. Such verses have been revealed both in Mecca and Medina, such as the verse of Sūrah Yāsīn, which is Meccan, and which says, *It is the same to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not have faith* (36:10), and the verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah, which is Medinan and says, *As for the faithless, it is*

the same to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not have faith (2:6).

The context of the verses indicates that the meaning of the sentence, *because of their doings*, refers to their disbelief in the All-beneficent in opposition to the truth of Islam. And the word calamity (*qāriʿa*) means a disaster that strikes a person in such a way that suggests that there is yet worse to come.

The verse contains a clear warning to those who practice disbelief of a torment that cannot be repelled, and it also mentions the signs and precedents of that torment that appear one after the other until the promised torment itself arrives.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is as follows: 'Undoubtedly, they will be continue to be struck by calamities close to home because of what they have done—the disbelief towards the All-beneficent in the face of the call to the truth of Islam—until the torment that God has warned them of descends, and God does not break His promise and His words do not change.'

Considering that this chapter of the Qur'an is Meccan—as evidenced by the content of the verses—and also taking into consideration the events that took place after the Prophetic mission and before the migration of the Messenger of God, and examining the incidents that took place after the migration until the conquest of Mecca, it conveys the meaning that '*the faithless*' refers to the disbelievers of the Arabs, including the people of Mecca and others who initially rejected the invitation of Islam and reached the peak of denial and stubbornness, and incited persecution and corruption in the land.

The meaning of those who were afflicted with calamities refers to the disbelievers around Mecca, who were affected by wars, killings, and plundering. And the meaning of those who had calamities befall them near their homes refers to the people of Mecca, who experienced unpleasant incidents around their city; smoke irritated their eyes, and fear, grief, and other evil effects deprived them of sleep and sustenance. The meaning of the promised torment refers to the torment of the sword which the disbelievers faced during the Battle of Badr, the Battle of Uhud, and others.

It must be understood that the torment that God threatens the disbelievers with in this verse is different from the kind of torment mentioned

in Sūrah Yūnus, which has already been explained previously, where it states: *There is a messenger for every nation; so when their messenger comes, judgment is made between them with justice, and they are not wronged … and judgment will be made between them with justice and they will not be wronged* (10:47–54). This verse from *S*ūrah Yūnus is a general threat to all nations, while the current verses are specific threats to the disbelievers of Quraysh and others who stood against the call of the Messenger of God in the early days of Islam.

We also mentioned earlier in the first volume of this commentary, in regard to the verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah, specifically the verse, *As for the faithless, it is the same to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not have faith* (2:6), that wherever the phrase '*the faithless*' is used in the Qur'an, without any sort of qualification, it refers to the opponents of the Arab polytheists who initially opposed the call of Islam. By the same token, the meaning of '*the faithful*,' wherever it is mentioned without qualification, refers to the early Muslims who believed in Islam upon receiving the call.

It is important to know that the commentators have offered various explanations of the verse under discussion, however we have omitted them here because we do not believe they have anything beneficial to contribute to our understanding of it. Furthermore, what we have selected for discussion is sufficient for those interested in knowing more, and we shall return to these points in our treatment of the narrations.

وَلَقَدِ اسْتُهْزِئَ بِرُسُلٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَأَمْلَيْتُ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُهُمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عِقَابِ ﴿٣٢﴾

(13:32) Messengers were certainly derided before you. But then I gave respite to those who were faithless, then I seized them; so how was My retribution?

This verse emphasizes the same unequivocal threat that was made in the previous one, by citing precedents to indicate that the threat in the previous verse is not merely a threat, and it is not such that there is no evidence for its prior occurrence. On the contrary, it has occurred more times than can possibly be denied, and it is not as the disbelievers imagined when they said: *Certainly we and our fathers were promised this before. These are just*

myths of the ancients (27:68).

This is because before you—O Prophet of Islam—the pattern of disbelief and mockery faced by previous messengers mirrors the skepticism you encounter. Like your contemporaries who doubt your message and seek different signs despite the Quran's miraculous nature, earlier communities also demanded miracles tailored to their whims from their messengers. In dealing with disbelievers, My approach has always been one of (giving them) initial respite, followed by inevitable divine retribution. Consider My past punishments—were they mere threats, or something escapable, or even bearable? With the destruction that befell previous nations, the idolaters of your time must recognize the certainty of My punishment. They should learn from history, altering their deeds to avoid the fate that consumed those before them.

From this, it becomes clear that what some commentators have said about the verse under discussion being a consolation and a source of encouragement for the Messenger of God is not correct.

Note that the verse treats derision as interchangeable disbelief when it says, *Messengers were certainly derided before you. But then I gave respite to those who were faithless* ...—this shows that their mockery was grounded in disbelief and that their disbelief was a form of mockery. Therefore, they were disbelievers who mocked the signs of God and who behaved in a similar manner to the contemporaries of the Messenger of God, who denied the Qur'an, which was itself a sign of God, and mockingly asking: *'Why has not some sign been sent down to him from his Lord?'*

أَفَمَنْ هُوَ قَائِمٌ عَلَى كُلِّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ وَجَعَلُواْ لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاء قُلْ سَمُّوهُمْ
أَمْ تُنَبِّئُونَهُ بِمَا لاَ يَعْلَمُ فِي الأَرْضِ أَم بِظَاهِرٍ مِّنَ الْقَوْلِ بَلْ زُيِّنَ لِلَّذِينَ
كَفَرُواْ مَكْرُهُمْ وَصُدُّواْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَن يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ ﴿٣٣﴾

(13:33) Is He who sustains every soul (*qā'im 'alā kulli nafs*) in accordance with what it earns ...? And yet they ascribe partners to Allah! Say, 'Name them!' Will you inform Him of something He does not know about on the earth, or of (what are) mere words? Rather their scheming is presented as decorous to the faithless, and they have been barred from the way; and whomever Allah leads astray, has no guide.

Being a *qā'im ʿalā* for something means to have control over it, and to be a *qā'im bi* for something means to be a kind of custodian for it or a manager of its affairs. God, the Almighty, is both a *qā'im ʿalā* for every soul and for what it earns. He is a *qā'im ʿalā* for every soul, because He is the One who surrounds its essence, has power over it, and is the witness of and watcher over it. As for His being a *qā'im ʿalā* of what it does, it is because He is the director of its actions and transforms it from a state of motion or stillness to a state of action, recording its deeds in the registers of actions, and then transforming them into the rewards and punishments of this world and the hereafter, proximity and distance, guidance and misguidance, blessings and curses, Paradise and Hellfire.

This verse follows logically from the previous verses, in terms of stating that God, the Almighty, guides whomever He wills, and rewards with the best of rewards, misguides whomever He wills, and punishes with the severest punishment. And since all affairs are in His hands, He is responsible for every soul and its actions, has authority over it, and manages the system of its actions. In this context, is there anyone remotely equal to Him to be counted as His partner in divinity?

From this, it can be understood that part of the initial statement, *Is He who sustains every soul in accordance with what it earns ...?* has been left implicit, and the phrase, *And yet they ascribe partners to Allah!* refers to that omission (its implied meaning is: 'Is there anyone equal to Him who is responsible for every soul... is there anyone worthy of being His partner?').

Among the baseless and ridiculous explanations that have been mentioned about this verse, is one that is attributed to Ḍaḥḥāk, who claims that the intended meaning of '*who*' in the sentence '*Is He who sustains every soul in accordance with what it earns ...?* refers to angels, not God Almighty, because angels are the ones who are entrusted with the deeds of people. Then the meaning of the verse would be: 'Are the angels who are entrusted with people's deeds by the command of God then His partners?' The absurdity of this reading stems from the fact that it is entirely alien to the context of the verses under discussion.

'Name them!' Will you inform Him of something He does not know about on the earth, or of mere words?—After stating, *And yet they ascribe partners to Allah!*, God then nullifies their claim with another expression that is derived from the previous explanation.

Therefore, God commands His Prophet to argue with them in a way that is wondrous and unprecedented in its context, to oblige them to describe these partners, as attributes are what make everything determined and define their affairs and effects. And if these idols are indeed God's partners and intercessors at His court, they must have attributes that have allowed them to achieve such a status and position, just as God Almighty is worshipped because He is alive, knowing, able, creator, a sovereign, and a director, and for this reason, He is the Lord of everything. However, when these idols are mentioned and introduced, nothing is counted for them except the names Hubal, Lāt, and ʿUzza, and no attribute or merit is mentioned that would make them worthy of becoming partners of God.

Then, he is commanded to ask them, *Will you inform Him* (am tunabbi'ūna-hu) *of something He does not know about on the earth ...?* (Note that the preposition *am* here is detached, meaning 'or' or 'rather'). That is, the logical implication of your idolatry and polytheism is that you will inform God of something of which He is not aware, because if He had a partner on earth, He would certainly know about it Himself, and it is not possible for one partner in the management of creation to remain unaware of the other partner, because he would eventually realize that someone else is exercising a different influence on creation and, therefore, there must be another manager to the cosmos besides Himself.

However, the reality is that God Almighty is the sole planner of all affairs, and He has seen no other influence or effect from anyone but Himself, whether in opposition to his will or conforming to it.

The proof that God has no partner for Himself is that He is an authority (*qā'im ʿalā*) over all souls and is well aware of what they do. In other words, both creation and command are from Him, and He is a witness and observer on everything according to conclusive arguments that leave no room for doubt.

In summary, this verse is similar to another verse that says: *Say, 'Will you inform Allah about something He does not know in the heavens or on the earth?'* (10:18)

Then he adds the phrase, ... *or of mere words?* (ẓāhir min al-qawl) In fact, this information you provide that there are partners for God is merely an empty statement that is completely devoid of reality. This sentence is similar to the verse that says: *These are but names which you have coined—you*

and your fathers—for which Allah has not sent down any authority (53:23). Some commentators have said that the meaning of '*ẓāhir min al-qawl*' is actually a revealed book from God, in which these idols are named and described. The conclusion of the verse is that you have no rational nor transmitted evidence for the divinity of these idols or of their being partners with God Almighty. However, this reading does not accord with the phrasing of the verse in question.

The source of the connection between these three arguments is that the idolaters, in worshipping idols and considering them as partners of God, faced objections from three angles. First, if they claim that these idols are partners to God, they have no evidence for this, because they cannot point to any attributes in their idols that would indicate their divinity. Second, if they claim that they have seen such attributes in their idols, they have lied, because it means that they have discovered the existence of God's partners, while God is unaware of their existence. And third, if they simply speak meaningless words without there being any truth behind them, they have actually attempted to deceive God, and God is far greater than these words, much greater indeed.

In his commentary *al-Kashshāf*, al-Zamakhsharī writes: 'This argument and its methods are very strange, and it itself cries out in a fluent and elegant language that it is not from a human source—unless one is ignorant or biased.'

Rather their scheming is presented as decorous to the faithless, and they have been barred from the way; and whomever Allah leads astray, has no guide: The word '*rather*' represents an expression of contempt, and this verse is meant to dismiss the aforementioned arguments of the disbelievers and their implications. The meaning of the verse is: 'Leave these arguments aside, because if they consider God to have partners, it is not due to any of the reasons we have mentioned. Instead, Satan has made idolatry appear attractive to them and has thereby hindered them from God's path.

The disbelievers know that there is no argument to support the association of these partners with God, and they also know that simply claiming that does not make the idols genuine partners to God, their goal for promoting idolatry and the divinity of idols and drawing the public's attention to them is solely to obtain money and worldly embellishments. Since your prophecy blocks their path to gain these benefits, they stubbornly and

hostilely adhere to idolatry, trying to mislead people.

Satan has made this scheme and plan appear attractive to them, and there is no other reason for their idolatry, neither have they any evidence nor a motive from any other direction. Although Satan has adorned these schemes to them and led them astray, and they have also misled people, God in the meantime has misled them and deprived them of the blessing of guidance, and whoever God misleads will have no guide.

لَّهُمْ عَذَابٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَعَذَابُ الآخِرَةِ أَشَقُّ وَمَا لَهُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ مِن وَاقٍ ﴿٣٤﴾

(13:34) There is a punishment for them in the life of this world, and the punishment of the Hereafter will surely be harder (*ashaqq*), and they have no defender (*wāqq*) against Allah.

The word *ashaqq* ('harder') is a comparative form derived from the root word *mashaqqa*, meaning 'hardship'. The term *wāqq* comes from the root *wiqāya*, meaning protection.

In this verse, the punishment that God threatened the faithless with in the previous verses is briefly described. The purpose of the statement, '*and they have no defender against Allah*,' is to negate the possibility of intercession or any of its benefits for them. The meaning of this statement is that they will have no one to intercede on their behalf under any circumstances.

مَّثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي وُعِدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ أُكُلُهَا دَائِمٌ وَظِلُّهَا تِلْكَ عُقْبَى الَّذِينَ اتَّقَواْ وَّعُقْبَى الْكَافِرِينَ النَّارُ ﴿٣٥﴾

(13:35) A description (*mathal*) of the paradise promised to the Godwary (*muttaqīn*): streams run in it, its fruits and shade are everlasting. Such is the requital of those who are Godwary; and the requital of the faithless is the Fire.

The word *mathal* refers to a description that perfectly represents and embodies the thing it describes.

This verse invokes the beautiful promise that is reserved for the righteous believers, in contrast to the threats made against the disbelievers; this helps to clarify the ultimate outcomes of both groups, and sets the

stage for the conclusion of the discourse that summarizes the results of the efforts of believers and disbelievers in their journey toward God and their return to Him.

Note that the verse juxtaposes the faithless with the *muttaqīn* ('Godwary'), rather than the faithful. This serves to point out that those who will attain this excellent outcome have both faith and righteous deeds together; for if they have faith in God but do not perform righteous deeds, they will be considered believers in God but disbelievers in His signs.

Among the subtle allusions employed in this verse is the contrasting of the terms *the Godwary* and *the faithless* in the first instance, followed by *those who are Godwary* and *those who are faithless* in the latter instance. This perhaps implies that the past actions of restraint and disbelief, as well as the qualities of being righteous or being a disbeliever, have the same connotation in this context, as their collective deeds in this world become their defining acts. The necessary implication of this is that good deeds must be consistently performed; the expressions *the faithless* and *the Godwary*, which indicate the occurrence of such actions, convey the same meaning as the terms *those who are faithless* and *those who are Godwary*, which signify the continuous performance of such acts.

This passage emphasizes that there are two distinct groups: one consistently engages in disbelief, while the other firmly follows the path of faith. However, those who vacillate between disbelief and faith, whose deeds and beliefs are inconsistent and change frequently, sometimes leaning toward disbelief and then turning to faith, or vice versa, have not firmly committed to either path. As a result, they fall outside the purview of these verses. This distinction is an important point to note.

It should be mentioned that the previous verses employed various forms of reference to God, such as, *Thus have We sent you* (13:30), wherein God is speaking directly to others, and *Rather all dispensation belongs to Allah* (13:31), where He is referred to in the third person. Furthermore, in the sentence *But then I gave respite to those who were faithless* (13:32), He is again regarded as the sole speaker, and in the phrase *And yet they ascribe partners to Allah!*, He is again mentioned in the third Person. The reason for this variation is clear: reference to *Thus have We sent you …* in relation to others points to the involvement of intermediaries, such as angels and divine revelation; the reference to *Rather all dispensation belongs to Allah*

in absentia indicates that every matter, whether mediated or unmediated, ultimately returns to the divine status of God, who is the sustainer of all things.

Moreover, the expression *But then I gave respite to those who were faithless, then I seized them* signifies that, in reality, God has no partner or intercessor, contrary to the claims made by the disbelievers.

Finally, the phrase, *Such is the requital of those who are Godwary; and the requital of the faithless is the Fire* (13:35), highlights the ultimate outcomes of both groups, and with this statement, the discussion concerning the believers and the idolaters in terms of the effects of truth and falsehood on their beliefs and deeds comes to an end.

Note that we have said that these correlated verses are a continuation of the previous set of ten verses, which began with: *He sends down water from the sky* ... (13:17).

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, Khālid b. Nujayḥ narrates from Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad regarding the verse, *Look! The hearts find assurance in Allah's remembrance!* (13:28): 'Hearts also find assurance in Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh, for he is the Remembrance (*dhikr*) of God and the Veil (*ḥijāb*) of God.'

Author's comment: See also the verse: *God has sent a remembrance* (dhikr) *to you, a messenger* (65:10), in which the Prophet of God is also called a *dhikr*.

In fact, there are several narrations regarding the statement, *Look! The hearts find assurance in Allah's remembrance*, that explain that the Prophet and his Household are the true embodiments of God's remembrance.

(2) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Suyūṭī relates that Abū al-Shaykh narrated from Anas that the Prophet, when the verse, *Look! The hearts find assurance in Allah's remembrance*, was revealed, turned to his Companions and said:
'Do you know the meaning of this verse?' They replied, 'God and His Messenger know better.' He said, 'It refers to someone who loves God, His Messenger, and my companions.'

(3) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated that when the Prophet recited the verse, *those who have faith, and whose hearts find assurance*

in the remembrance of Allah.' Look! The hearts find assurance in Allah's remembrance, he asked, 'O son of Umm Salīm, do you know who they are?' I said, 'Who are they, O Prophet of God?' He replied, 'We, the Household of the Prophet, and our followers.'

(4) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Suyūṭī cites Ibn Mardawayh, who narrates from ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib that, when this verse was revealed, the Prophet said: 'These are the ones who love God, His Messenger, and the family of His Messenger truthfully, not falsely, and love the believers, whether present or absent. Indeed, it is by the remembrance of God that they love one another.'

Author's comment: All these narrations are examples of analogizing the specific to the general. Yes, the Prophet of God, his pure family, the chosen ones among his companions, and the believers are true embodiments of God's remembrance because God is remembered through them. However, the noble verse is general in meaning and applies to any form of remembrance.

There are also several narrations regarding the Tree of Ṭūbā and the phrase, *happy are they* (ṭūbā la-hum) *and good is their destination* (13:29).

(5) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, it is narrated from his father, from Muḥammad b. Abī ʿUmayr, from Hishām b. Sālim, from Abī ʿAbd Allāh as part of the hadith of the Miʿrāj, that the Prophet said:

'Suddenly, I saw a tree, and if a bird were sent to fly around it and kept flying for seven hundred years, it would not manage to circle around it fully. In paradise, there is no house except that a branch from the tree has entered it. I asked Gabriel, "What tree is this?" He replied, "It is the Tree of Ṭūbā, about which God Almighty has said, '*happy are they and good is their destination*.'

Author's comment: This meaning has been narrated in multiple ways. In some of these narrations, it is mentioned as follows:

'Gabriel plucked a fruit from that tree, gave it to me, and I ate it. The Lord transferred it to my back, and when I descended to the earth, I bedded with Khadīja and she became pregnant with Fāṭima. Then after that, whenever I saw Fāṭima, I smelled the scent of the Tree of Ṭūbā from her.'

(6) In *Kitāb al-Kharā'ij*, it is mentioned that the Messenger of God said to Fāṭima: 'O Fāṭima, I have received glad tidings from my

Lord concerning my brother and cousin, and it is that God has married Fāṭima to ʿAlī and has ordered Riḍwān, the keeper of Paradise, to shake the Tree of Ṭūbā, and it bore pieces equal in number to the friends of my household. Then He created angels from light and gave each angel a piece, and when the Resurrection sets in and people are scattered, no one remains as a friend to us unless one of those pieces is given to him, which is a voucher for their salvation from the hellfire.'

Author's comment: In *Tafsīr al-Burhān* by Muwaffaq b. Aḥmad, which also mentions a similar narration from Bilal b. Ḥumāma, from the Messenger of God. The same narration has been reported from Umm Salama, Salmān al-Fārsī, and ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. In these versions, we read:

'When God took the angels as witnesses to the marriage of Fāṭima to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, He ordered the Tree of Ṭūbā to shed its fruits and ornaments. The tree did so, and the angels and the heavenly maidens collected these and gifted them to one another as a token of honor until the Day of Resurrection.' A similar narration has been reported from Imām al-Riḍā.

(7) In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, al-Thaʿlabī narrates from his own chain of transmission that al-Kalbī quotes Ibn ʿAbbās and Abū Ṣāliḥ as saying: 'Ṭūbā is a tree whose roots are in ʿAlī's house in heaven, and in every believer's house, there is a branch of it.' Then he said Abū Baṣīr also quoted this from Imām Sadiq.

(8) In the *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, from *Tafsīr al-Thaʿlabī*, it is narrated from Jābir, from Abū Jaʿfar that the Messenger of God was asked about the meaning of Ṭūbā, and he said: 'It is a tree in Heaven whose roots are in ʿAlī's house, and its branches cast shade upon the people of Heaven.' They asked, 'O Messenger of God! We already asked you before, and you said its roots were in your house and its branches are over the people of Heaven, and now you are saying its roots are in ʿAlī's house and its branches are over the people of Heaven?' He replied, 'Yes, my house and ʿAlī's house in Heaven are one and in the same place.'

Author's comment: In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī also narrates a similar narration via his own chain, from al-Ḥākim Abī al-Qāsim al-Ḥaskānī, from Mūsā b. Jaʿfar, from his father, from his ancestors, from the Messenger of God.

Numerous narrations on this subject have been reported from both Shiʿa and Sunni sources, and it appears that they are not related to the exegesis of the verse, but rather to its interior meaning, as the Tree of Ṭūbā represents the divine vicegerency (*wilāya*) of Almighty God, which is the office of ʿAlī in this nation, who was its first holder and its institutor, and the believers who are the followers of his vicegerency. Furthermore, ʿAlī's house in the Paradise of Bliss, which is the paradise of vicegerency, is one and the same as the house of the Messenger of God, without competition or dispute—consider this carefully.

(9) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Suyūṭī says that Ibn Jarir and Ibn Mundhir report from Ibn Jurayḥ, in connection with the phrase, *Yet they defy the All beneficent* (13:30), that this was revealed when the Messenger of God made a treaty with the Quraysh at Ḥudaybiyya. He wrote, 'In the name of God, the All beneficent, the Most Merciful,' but they objected, saying they did not recognize 'the All beneficent' and only wrote 'In Your name, O God' in their documents. He had to write in the same way. That was when this phrase was revealed.

(10) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr* al-Suyūṭī cites this narration from Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and Abū al-Shaykh, as well as from Qatāda. However, the discerning reader will have noted that the verses, as they appear in their context, are Meccan, while the Peace of Hudaybiyya is one of the events that took place after the Emigration to Medina. Moreover, the context of the verse under discussion does not match these narrations, as it makes no sense for one part of the verse to be about the Peace of Hudaybiyya, and the other parts to be about other events.

(11) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is narrated from Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abū Al-Shaykh, and Ibn Mardawayh, who quoted ʿAtiyya al-Awfī as saying that the polytheists said to the Messenger of God: 'Why are the mountains of Mecca not moved for us and why is our land not smoothed out so that we can cultivate it? Or, why has the distance of the earth not been shortened for us, just as Solomon could shorten the earth for his people using the wind? Or, why have not the dead been brought to life for us, just as Jesus brought his people back to life?' In response to them, God sent the following

verse: '*If only it were a Qur'an whereby the mountains could be moved, or the earth could be toured, or the dead could be spoken to . . . Have not the faithful yet realized... ?* (13:31).

'Atiya al-Awfī was asked: 'Do you attribute this narration to one of the companions of the Messenger of God?' He replied, 'Yes, I narrate it from Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, from the Messenger of God.'

Author's comment: There are other narrations with similar content.

(12) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, it is stated that the Imām said: 'If there were a Qur'an with such attributes, it would be this Qur'an.'

(13) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates from Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā from Aḥmad b. Abī Zāhir or another person, from Muḥammad b. Ḥammād, from his brother Aḥmad b. Ḥammād from Ibrāhīm, from his father, from Abū al-Ḥasan al-Awwal, who in the course of a tradition, said: 'God Almighty says in His Book, *If only it were a Qur'an whereby the mountains could be moved* ... And we are the inheritors of the Book, the Book that contains things that can move the mountains, the earth could be toured, and bring the dead back to life...'

Author's comment: The chains of the narration for this tradition are weak.

(14) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is narrated from Ibn Jarīr that 'Alī recited the verse in this way: '*Is it not yet clear to the believers ...?* (a fa-lam yatabayyan alladhīna āmanū).'

Author: This recitation is also narrated from Ibn 'Abbās.

(15) In *Majma' al-bayān*, it is mentioned that 'Alī, Ibn 'Abbās, 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, Zayd b. 'Alī, Ja'far b. Muḥammad, Ibn Abī Malīka, al-Jaḥdarī, and Abū Yazīd al-Madanī have recited the verse as, *a fa-lam yatabayyan* ... However, the most well-known mode of recitation is *a fa-lam yay'as...*

(16) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, it is narrated from Abū Jafar, from Abū al-Jārūd that, in the explanation of the verse, *The faithless will continue to be visited by catastrophes* (qāri'a) *because of their doings* ... (13:31) he explained that the word *qāri'a* means punishments, and the phrase *or they will land near their habitations* means that the punishment descends upon another community, but they suffer from seeing and hearing it. These disbelievers are the same

as those whose punishment has reached them, and although they should learn from seeing and hearing the fate of others and refrain from disbelief and disobedience, they do not learn their lesson and persist in their disbelief until the promise that God has given to the believers comes, that is, He supports them and humiliates the disbelievers.

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Verses 36–42

This section of verses follows on from the previous one and continues to respond to the statement of the disbelievers, *'Why has not some sign been sent down to him from his Lord?'* (13:27).

وَالَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَفْرَحُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمِنَ الأَحْزَابِ مَن يُنكِرُ بَعْضَهُ قُلْ إِنَّمَا أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ وَلا أُشْرِكَ بِهِ إِلَيْهِ أَدْعُو وَإِلَيْهِ مَآبِ ﴿٣٦﴾

(13:36) Those whom We have given the Book rejoice in what has been sent down to you. Among the factions are those who deny a part of it. Say, 'Indeed I have been commanded to worship Allah and not to ascribe any partner to Him. To Him do I summon and to Him will be my return.'

It appears that the phrase, *Those whom We have given the Book*, refers to the Jews and Christians or these two groups along with the Zoroastrians, because this is the usual way these terms are used in the Qur'an. As for the fact that it is mentioned that the People of the Book rejoice because the Qur'an has been sent down to the Prophet, the reason for this is that this chapter is of Meccan provenance and, according to historical accounts, the Arabian Jewish tribes in the early days of Prophetic mission were not opposed to the Prophet of Islam or his teachings. Rather, the events that led them to oppose him all took place after the Emigration to Medina. By contrast, in the early days of the migration, some of them accepted the call to Islam, testified to the prophethood of the Prophet, and testified that he was the prophet whose coming was foretold in their books. The Qur'an relates this about them in the verse: *... and a witness from the Children of Israel has testified to its like and believed ...* (46:10).

As for the Christians, there were some among them who were following the true religion at that time and showed no enmity toward the call to Islam, like the Christians of Abyssinia, as mentioned in the story of the Muslims' migration to Abyssinia, and some other non-Abyssinian people.

The Qur'an states about their likes: "*Those to whom We gave the Book before it are the ones who believe in it* (28:52), and also states: *Among the people of Moses is a nation who guide by the truth and do justice thereby* (7:159).

Similarly, the Zoroastrians of that time were also awaiting the advent and salvation of the Seal of the Prophets and the emergence of a religion that would promote truth and justice, and they did not show enmity and opposition to the Prophetic mission in the same way as the polytheists did.

With this background in mind, it appears that the intended referents of the People of the Book are these Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians, especially the true believers among the Christians who believed that Jesus was a human being whom God had sent as a prophet—like Negus (the king of Abyssinia) and his followers believed.

The latter part of this verse states: *Indeed I have been commanded to worship Allah and not to ascribe any partner to Him. To Him do I summon and to Him is my return.'* This appears to confirm the above and it is very clear that the address in this sentence is more suitable for Christians than any other religious group.

Among the factions **(al-Aḥzāb)** ***are those who deny a part of it:*** The use of the definite article *al-* in *al-Aḥzāb* ('the factions') suggests that this term refers to a specific and known group. In other words: Some of the factions among the People of the Book deny some of what has been revealed to you; for example, they reject those verses that point to the Oneness of God, negate the Trinity, and negate other false beliefs, corrupted knowledge, and distorted rulings of the People of the Book.

Say, 'Indeed I have been commanded to worship Allah and not to ascribe any partner to Him ...'—This sentence indicates that the intended meaning of the 'part' of the revelation which they deny refers to the verses that convey the unity in worship and obedience. In another verse, the Prophet is instructed to invite them to his message by finding points of agreement with them and states: *Say, 'O People of the Book! Come to a word common between us and you: that we will worship no one but Allah, and that we will not ascribe any partner to Him, and that we will not take each other as lords besides Allah.'* (3:64)

God bids the Prophet to conclude this statement by saying: '*To Him do I summon and to Him is my return*'—in other words, He is my reference in all things.

Therefore, at the beginning of this statement, the Prophet announces his goal for himself and others, and at the end, he expresses their own path, saying words to the effect of: 'I am commanded to worship only God, and my actions and my call should be based on this. I follow this path among people, and I do not call them toward anyone other than Him, nor do I refer to anyone other than Him in any of my affairs.'

Based on this explanation, the verse conveys the same meaning as the verse: *Say, 'This is my way. I summon to Allah with insight—I and he who follows me. Immaculate is Allah, and I am not one of the polytheists.'* (12:108).

It is also possible that the meaning of the phrase, '*... and to Him is my return*,' could refer to the issue of resurrection, in which case the verse means: 'I only invite toward Him, because my return is only toward Him.'

Commentators have also presented alternative explanations of the phrase, *Those whom We have given the Book rejoice in what has been sent down to you*:

For example, some have read the word '*Book*' in the verse as referring to the Qur'an, and the phrase, *Those whom We have given the Book*, as referring to the Companions of the Prophet of God, while saying the term '*factions*' refers to the Arab tribes that formed groups against the Prophet and his followers. These tribes, including Quraysh and others, created many obstacles and setbacks for him.

However, this explanation is not correct, because there is no precedent in the Qur'an for specifically applying the phrase, *Those whom We have given the Book*, to the Companions of the Messenger of God. Additionally, even if we were to read the verse in this way, it would mean that this meaning has been repeated, as the following verse also pertains to the same meaning, which does not befit the eloquence of the Qur'an.

Some may have said that this phrase is solely refers to the Jews, and that the intended meaning of '*the Book*' is the Torah, and that when they spoke of some factions denying parts of the Qur'an, they were referring to those verses of its that contained rulings contradictory to the distorted rulings of the Torah. If you argue that denying such verses is not limited to just some Jews, but rather that all Jews denied them, the response would be that it is true; however, some Jews denied that group of verses without the joy and pleasure of the Qur'an's revelation, while the remaining Jews were both happy and denied those verses. However, in order to establish this meaning

for the verse, commentators were forced to undertake lengthy arguments.

Some commentators have reported that they said: The meaning of the pronoun '*those*' applies to all Muslims, and the referents of the word '*factions*' are the Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians. Others have also argued that the sentence '... and *to Him will be my return*' conveys the implicit meaning of: 'to Him is my destination, and yours as well.'

However, these statements have no basis in the apparent language of the verse, and there is no benefit in investigating or responding to them further.

وَكَذَٰلِكَ أَنزَلْنَاهُ حُكْمًا عَرَبِيًّا وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُم بَعْدَ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلَا وَاقٍ ﴿٣٧﴾

(13:37) Thus We have sent it down as a dispensation (*ḥukm*) in Arabic; and should you follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, you shall have against Allah neither any guardian nor any defender.

The demonstrative pronoun '*thus*' refers to the Book mentioned in the previous verse, which includes all the scriptures revealed to the previous prophets, such as the Torah and the Gospel.

The term *ḥukm* refers to a judgment and a verdict, as the purpose of a book revealed from heaven is precisely this. As he stated in another verse: ... *and He sent down with them the Book with the truth, that it may judge between the people concerning that about which they differed* ... Hence, from one perspective, the book is simultaneously a divine judgment and, from another perspective, it serves as a judge between the people. This is the meaning of *ḥukm*, not *ḥikma*, as some have claimed.

The term 'Arabic' serves as an adjective for 'judgment' and highlights the significance of the book being revealed in Arabic, the language of the Messenger of God. This aligns with the divine tradition of sending prophets with messages in their people's language, as stated in the verse: *We did not send any messenger except with the language of his people* (14:4). Implicitly, this also indicates that the 'people of the Book' referred to in the preceding verse are primarily the Jews and Christians. The focus of these verses is largely on them, similar to how the previous verses were directed towards the idolaters.

Based on this, the statement, ... *and should you follow their desires* ..., serves as a prohibition from following the desires of the people of the Book, which is not only mentioned in this verse but has been repeatedly forbidden in the Qur'an, with the primary reason being that they demanded miracles in addition to the miracle of the Qur'an from the Prophet. Similarly, the idolaters sought miracles from him. In addition, the people of the Book considered abrogation of laws to be impossible and expected God's Messenger to adhere to their own religious laws. These two reasons, especially the first, were the main factors that led them to such expectations.

According to this explanation, the verse means: 'Just as we revealed the Book to the People of the Book (Jews and Christians), we also revealed this Qur'an to you, in your language, and in a state that contains divine judgment, or in a state that governs among people. And if you follow the desires of the people of the Book—if, like them, you hope that a sign other than the Qur'an will be revealed to you, or if you compromise with them, desiring to retain a part of their abrogated laws or their distorted ones—We will punish you. In that situation, you will have no recourse but to receive God's punishment, and nobody will be able to save you from it. Therefore, the addressee in this verse is solely God's Messenger, not the community as a whole, as some have mistakenly thought.

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلاً مِّن قَبْلِكَ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَذُرِّيَّةً وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُولٍ أَن يَأْتِيَ بِآيَةٍ إِلاَّ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ لِكُلِّ أَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ ﴿٣٨﴾

(13:38) Certainly We have sent messengers before you, and We appointed for them wives and descendants; and a messenger may not bring a sign except by Allah's leave. There is a decree for every term:

After the Messenger of God was forbidden from following the desires of the People of the Book with regard to the signs in addition to the Qur'an they demand from him, this verse reminds him of the true reality and rids him of any desire for such reliance, urging him to trust in God and refer to Him in all his affairs.

The fact is that it is God's established modus to select messengers, who are human beings, from among the people themselves and to send the messengers following a familiar and customary way, not for them to control

the unseen realms or to possess any attributes of divinity in their capacity, such as having supernatural powers to do whatever they want. They are, after all, just like other people and have no authority or control over their own affairs, on the contrary, everything is in God's hands.

God is the only one who can send forth signs and miracles if He so chooses. However, He does so only when His wisdom dictates, and not at all times are these occurrences considered appropriate or wise, lest the divine order become chaotic or disrupted. Each specific period has its suitable wisdom and divine decree, and thus for every particular time there is an appropriate sign.

This is the reality indicated in the verse, *Certainly We have sent messengers before you, and We appointed for them wives and descendants*, and the statement, *and a messenger may not bring a sign except by Allah's leave*, points to the fact that prophets do not possess any supernatural powers and are not independent in what they want. They can only accomplish what God permits them to do.

The meaning of the phrase, *There is a decree for every term*, is this: There is a specific decree for each period, and there is a special time for each decree, as prescribed by divine ordinance. This is a reference to the exceptions mentioned earlier, *except by Allah's leave*, and to the established custom of God and His divine decrees.

Thus, it is only God who can reveal whatever He wills and grant permission for whatever He desires. However, He does not reveal, and He does not permit at all times and for every sign, for there is a specific decree for each period, which He has written. Nothing happens except for the events written in that decree.

The explanation by some that the phrase, *There is a decree for every term*, is equivalent to the meaning, 'for every book, there is a term,' meaning that for every book God sends down there is a specific time in which it is sent down, in which it is acted upon—so that the Torah has a specific time, the Bible has a specific time, and the Qur'an as a specific time—is not correct and not worthy of consideration.

يَمْحُو اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاء وَيُثْبِتُ وَعِندَهُ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ ﴿٣٩﴾

(13:39) Allah effaces (*yamḥū*) and confirms (*yuthbit*) whatever He wishes and with Him is the Mother Book.

The word *yamḥū* means to remove all trace of something. When it is said, 'I effaced the writing' (*maḥawtu al-kitāb*), it means that the lines and images of the writing were removed. In 42:24, when God says, *Allah will efface the falsehood and confirm the truth with His words*, it means that God removes the traces of falsehood. Similarly, He also said, *As for the scum, it leaves as dross* (13:17) and *We made the night and the day two signs. Then We effaced the sign of the night, and made the sign of the day lightsome* (17:12), meaning that He removed the traces of darkness from the night. Thus, *maḥw* ('effacing') is synonymous with *naskh* ('abrogation'). When it is said, 'The sun abrogates the shadow' (*nasukhat al-shams al-ẓill*), it means that the sun removes the shadow and all of its traces.

In the present verse, the term *yuthbit*, derived from *ithbāt* ('to confirm') is mentioned in contrast to *maḥw*. *Ithbāt* means keeping something in its place so that it does not move or slip. For example, when it is said: 'the peg is firmly fixed in the ground' (*athbata al-watad fī a-arḍ*), it means that the peg has been firmly hammered into the ground in such a way that it does not budge or move. Therefore, in this context, the opposite of confirmation is effacement, which means the removal of traces of something after it has been affirmed, and this term is frequently used in the Qur'an.

And the fact that the phrase, *Allah effaces and confirms whatever He wishes*, is connected on one hand to the phrase, *There is a decree for every term*, and on the other hand to the phrase, *and with Him is the Mother Book*, on the other, clearly indicates that the effacement and confirmation of the Book are specific to certain times. Thus, a book that God has affirmed at one point in time may later be obliterated by Him, and another book may be confirmed in its place. Therefore, the Almighty God continually confirms one book and effaces another.

Based on this, if we consider the written contents of the book to be expressions of God's signs, miracles, and indications of His names and attributes, and we recognize that the existence of everything is a sign of God Himself, then it is accurate to say that God is constantly engaged in effacing one sign and confirming another. Just as He Himself has said, *For any verse that We abrogate or remove from memories, We bring another which is better than it, or similar to it*, and He has also said, *When We change a sign with another in its place* (16:101).

Thus, the statement *Allah effaces and confirms whatever He wishes*

with the consideration that it is absolute and unqualified in relation to the phrase, *there is a decree for every term*, suggests that it is meant to be read as a rationale for it. The meaning of this is: 'for every time there is a specific book, so the books differ according to different times, and since the Almighty God effaces the book He wishes to remove of, He confirms another book in its place. Hence, the difference between the books is due to the differing divine dispositions and not because the books themselves have each a fixed condition that cannot be changed. Rather, it is the Almighty God who changes them, confirming another book in place of the effaced one.

And the statement, *and with Him is the Mother Book*, means that the essence and origin of the book exists with God, as the word 'Mother' (*umm*) denotes the origin of something from which it has emerged and to which it shall return. This statement refutes any misconception that may have arisen in a person's mind and explains the reality of the matter. For the difference in the state of the book, its effacement, its confirmation, the changing of its written decrees, and the judgments executed therein may lead some people to the misconception that God's decrees and the affairs of the world have no fixed and immutable nature, that His authority is dependent on external factors, much like the judgments of human beings and those with discernment. Or this may cause some people to conclude that God's commands are, in essence, meaningless and futile, that they neither have determinacy by their essential nature nor are they influenced by anything external.

The assertion has been refuted with the phrase *and with Him is the Mother Book* (13:39), which refers to the primal essence of scripture and the unchanging decree to which these fluctuating decrees—which are erased or established depending on times and terms—ultimately return. If the Mother Book itself were susceptible to erasure and confirmation, it would be akin to these fluctuating decrees, and be without any foundation.

If such changes were not rooted in this essence, then the acts of erasure and confirmation in God's actions would either be contingent upon external circumstances necessitating them, which would imply that the Almighty is constrained and dominated by external factors and causes just like us. Yet, God decrees and none can alter His decrees.

Alternatively, God's actions could be wholly arbitrary, which would

disrupt the organized system of creation and general providence by unbinding interconnected things. However, God has made clear that this is not the case, when He says: *We did not create the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them for play. We did not create them except with reason* (44:39).

In essence, the verse conveys that God, the Exalted, has a decree—or a ruling and judgment—for every moment and term. He erases these decrees, rulings, and judgments as He wills and establishes them as He wishes. This means that He can change a settled decree at one time and introduce another in its place at another time. Yet, relative to every moment, He has a decree that is unchanging and does not admit any erasure or confirmation. It is the foundational decree to which other decrees return and emanate from, being erased or established as He deems fit.

The verse clarifies, firstly, that the rule of erasure and confirmation is general for all occurrences across different times and terms, encompassing everything in the heavens, the earth, and whatever is in between. God has declared: *We did not create the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them except with reason and for a specified term* (46:3).

This is predicated upon the general statement, *Allah effaces and confirms whatever He wishes* (13:39). Limiting the context of this statement to prophetic signs does not necessitate that the verse is exclusively pertinent to that context, as the context is not inherently limiting.

Based on this premise, the flaw in the opinions of some commentators becomes apparent. For example, some assert that this verse pertains to jurisprudential rulings, referring to abrogation (*naskh*). Another view is that it relates to permitted actions inscribed in the records of deeds; God erases some and replaces them with acts of obedience or disobedience for which there is recompense. A third perspective holds that it concerns the erasure of the believers' sins as a favor and the confirmation of the disbelievers' sins as a penalty. A fourth posits that it pertains to situations influenced by supplications and alms during times of hardship, disasters, economic distress, and the like. A fifth believes that erasure is the removal of sins through repentance and confirmation is the transformation of bad deeds into good ones. A sixth view opines that it refers to God erasing certain generations and establishing others in their place. The seventh interpretation is about the passing away of the moon and the confirmation of the sun, signifying

the erasure of the sign of night and the establishment of the illuminating sign of the day. An eighth suggests it is about the erasure of this world and the confirmation of the hereafter. The ninth contemplates that this concerns souls during sleep; God takes some and releases others as He wills. The tenth interpretation holds that it is about the decreed fates written on the Night of Decree; God erases and confirms from it as He wishes.

These interpretations, and others like them, lack any textual evidence to limit the verse specifically to them. The verse has an undeniable generality. Observational experience corroborates this; the law of change is evident throughout the observable universe. When a thing is measured across two moments of its existence, change becomes evident in its essence, attributes, and actions. Yet, in the very essence of any state when considered in terms of its own existence and objective reality, it appears stable and unchanging because a thing does not change from its inherent nature.

Observable entities have two dimensions: one of change, which encompasses death, life, cessation, permanence, and various transformations; and another of stability, unchanging from its state. These two dimensions either relate directly to the Book of Erasure and Confirmation and the Mother of the Book, or they function as extensions of them. Regardless, the verse holds true in both dimensions.

Secondly, God, the Exalted, has a fixed decree for everything, which does not admit any change. This highlights the flaw in the claim of some who argue that every decree is subject to change, citing scattered narrations, supplications, and other verses and traditions indicating that supplications and alms can avert the negative aspects of decrees. An example of such a supplication is one that has been narrated from the Imāms and some Companions, where they have supplicated: 'O Lord, if You have written my name among the wretched, erase it from there and inscribe me among the fortunate,' and there are other supplications with similar themes. However, it is important to understand that these supplications pertain to non-definitive decrees (*al-qaḍā' ghayr al-maḥtūm*), which we do not deny.

Thirdly, the divine decree is bifurcated into a mutable decree (*qaḍā' mutaghayyir*) and an immutable one (*qaḍā' ghayr mutaghayyir*). The detailed exploration of this verse will be continued shortly.

وَإِن مَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِى نَعِدُهُمْ أَوْ نَتَوَفَّيَنَّكَ فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلاغُ

وَعَلَيْنَا الْحِسَابُ ﴿٤٠﴾

(13:40) Whether (*in mā*) We show you (*nuriyanna-ka*) a part of what We promise them, or take you away, your duty is only to communicate, and it is for Us to do the reckoning.

In is a conditional particle and *mā* is added for emphasis, and the evidence for this is the presence of the particle of emphasis *nūn* in the verb that follows (*nuriyy<u>anna</u>-ka*).

In this verse, God clarifies what the Prophet is responsible for, which is to engage in the task of warning and conveying the message. Therefore, he should not follow the desires of the people in relation to the revelation of a sign to him, as they demanded. Moreover, neither should he expect to see the outcome of his message or the impending punishment that God had promised them.

This verse contains an indication that divine reckoning takes place in this world, just as it takes place in the hereafter.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا نَأْتِي الْأَرْضَ نَنقُصُهَا مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا وَاللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ لَا مُعَقِّبَ لِحُكْمِهِ وَهُوَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٤١﴾

(13:41) Have they not seen how We visit the land diminishing it at its edges? Allah judges, and there is none who may repeal His judgment, and He is swift at reckoning.

This rhetorical question is meant to provoke them to reflect after they had been threatened with destruction. It is understood from this verse that 'visiting' the land and 'diminishing it' at its edges is a figure of speech for visiting death and destruction upon its inhabitants. This verse is similar to His saying, *Rather We have provided for them and their fathers until they lived on for long years. Do they not see how We visit the land diminishing it at its edges? Are they the ones who will prevail?* (21:44).

Some say that the verse refers to the people of Mecca who did not realize that their territory was being reduced from its fringes by the conquest of surrounding villages by the Muslims, one after the other. They should fear that their city will also be conquered and vengeance taken upon them. However, this interpretation is to be rejected because this particular chapter

is from the Meccan period, and such conquests only occurred after the Emigration to Medina. Although, the verses with their threats and warnings do foreshadow their destruction in the Battle of Badr and other battles, rather than the conquest of Mecca.

Allah judges, and there is none who may repeal His judgment, and He is swift at reckoning: This means that dominance belongs to Allah alone. He judges and there is no one who can reverse His judgment or overcome it by means of prevention or rejection. And He, the Exalted, takes account of every action as soon as it occurs without delay, so that no one can interfere or tamper with it. His statement, *Allah judges*... and so on, is in the same meaning as His saying in the verse of Sūrah al-Anbiyā' quoted above: *Are they the ones who will prevail?*

وَقَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ فَلِلَّهِ الْمَكْرُ جَمِيعًا يَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ وَسَيَعْلَمُ الْكُفَّارُ لِمَنْ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ ﴿٤٢﴾

(13:42) Those who were before them schemed; yet all devising belongs to Allah. He knows what every soul earns. Soon the faithless will know in whose favor the outcome of that abode will be.

This means that those who came before them plotted, but it did not benefit them. Their plotting could not prevent God from visiting the land and diminishing it at its edges. So, Allah the Exalted dominates all plotting, nullifies it, and turns it back on those who plot as a lesson.

The statement, *He knows what every soul earns*, occurs in the context of explaining His control over all plotting. After all, one's plots can only succeed when the one they are plotting against is ignorant of it. But if they know about it, then it becomes invalidated.

The expression, *soon the faithless will know in whose favor the outcome of that abode will be*, decisively asserts that the matter of outcomes essentially being based on their consequences is an inevitable reality that will not fail to occur, and they will witness it firsthand. Thus, there is no need to prolong the conversation with them further or indulge in informing them of this, for they will undoubtedly become aware soon enough.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Suyūṭī cites Ibn Shayba, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Mundhir, and Ibn Abī Ḥātim, all of whom narrate from Mujāhid that when the verse, *and a messenger may not bring a sign except by Allah's leave* (13:38) was revealed, the polytheists of the Quraysh said to Prophet, 'We don't believe you can do anything. The matter has already been decided!' In response to them, God revealed this verse, *Allah effaces and confirms whatever He wishes* (13:39), warning them that He can bring forth whatever He wills for them.'

Author's comment: The meaning of the verse, as we explained it above, is distinct from the content of this narration. Furthermore, the narration goes on to say that God decides each month of Ramaḍān concerning provisions, misfortunes, and other aspects, can either maintain or erase what He has decreed.

Another narration from Jābir relates that the Prophet said, 'God erases or increases the provisions of some, just as He can diminish or prolong their lifespans.' However, given the verse's general scope, the erasure and confirmation of provisions and lifespans are just instances of the general principles of confirmation and erasure.

(2) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Suyūṭī quotes Ibn Mardawayh narrating from Ibn ʿAbbās that someone asked the Prophet about the meaning of the verse, *Allah effaces and confirms whatever He wishes*, the Prophet replied: 'This relates to the Night of Determination and concerns the rise and fall of fortunes, and the erasure, and affirmation of individuals' lifespans and provisions. However, aspects like life and death, misery and felicity, remain unchanged from their predetermined state and are unaffected.'

Author's comment: This narration contradicts many other reports from the Prophet, the Imāms, and the Companions. It also conflicts with the general understanding of the verse and lacks logical coherence. A similar narration from Ibn ʿUmar quotes the Prophet saying, in relation tothe aforementioned verse, that aspects like misery and felicity, life and death, are not subject to erasure or affirmation.

(3) Additionally, in the same source, both Ibn Mardawayh and Ibn ʿAsākir narrate from ʿAlī that he asked the Prophet about this

verse, and he replied: 'I will delight you with its interpretation, and I will also delight those of my community who come after me. The essence is that almsgiving, when done correctly, kindness to parents, and righteous deeds in general, transform misery into felicity, prolong one's life, and protect from harmful incidents.'

Author's comment: This narration essentially lists some examples of what the verse is referring to without delving deeper into its meaning.

(4) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates through his chain of transmission from Hishām b. Sālim, Ḥafs b. Bakhtarī, and others, from Imām al-Ṣādiq regarding the verse, *Allah effaces and confirms whatever He wishes* that he said: 'Isn't it the case that what is confirmed can be erased, and what is erased or obliterated can be confirmed?'.

Author's comment: This narration has also been quoted by al-ʿAyyāshī in his exegesis, citing Jamīl, from him.

(5) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Fuḍayl b. Yasār that he said: 'I heard from Abū Jaʿfar say: "Some matters are inevitable and are bound to happen. Others are contingent and dependent, and God brings them about, erases or confirms them as He wills, and no one knows of these matters. But whatever is conveyed by the prophets will certainly come to pass, as God is not pleased to have Himself, His angels, or His prophets belied."'

Author's comment: This narration is also presented in the same book through another chain of transmission. Al-Kulaynī has also narrated it in *al-Kāfī*, via his own his chain from Fuḍayl from the Imām.

(6) In the same book, it is narrated from Zurāra from Abū Jaʿfar that he said: "Alī b. al-Ḥusayn would say: 'If it were not for a verse in the Book of God, I would inform you about everything that has occurred and will occur until the Day of Resurrection.' When asked about which verse he was referring to, he replied, *Allah effaces and confirms whatever He wishes and with Him is the Mother Book*.

Author's comment: The meaning of this tradition implies that from the noble verse it is understood that God intends His creation to live in uncertainty about future events, so they can act according to life's necessities. If they knew everything, they would not accept the usual causes of guidance, and the two foundational principles of life, fear, and hope would

lose their significance. Indeed, if the events of the future were entirely visible and unveiled to them, this divine purpose, which is the continuation of ordinary human life, would be corrupted. This is the reason why the Imām does not reveal the future, not because if he did, God, through erasing, confirming, and bringing about change, would contradict him by making something appear contrary to what he had informed others about, as the Imām is secure from such things. Thus, there is no contradiction between this narration and the previous ones.

(7) In the same source, there is a narration related by al-Fuḍayl b. Yasār from Abū ʿAbd Allāh, in which he states: 'Indeed, God, the Blessed and Exalted, wrote a book containing everything that has occurred and everything that will happen. He placed it before Him, and whatever He willed from it, He brought forward, and whatever He willed from it, He delayed. Whatever He willed from it, He erased, and whatever He willed from it occurred; and whatever He did not will did not happen.'

(8) In the same source, Ibn Sinān narrates from Abū ʿAbd Allāh: Indeed, Allah brings forward whatever He wills, delays whatever He wills, erases whatever He wills, and establishes whatever He wills. With Him is the Mother of the Book.' The Imām also said: 'Every matter that Allah wills is present in His knowledge before He decrees it. Nothing appears to Him except that it was already in His knowledge; for nothing appears to Him out of ignorance.'

Author's comment: There are numerous traditions on the topic of *Badā'* ('Divine Revision') from the Imāms, and we cannot simply disregard them on the pretext of their being solitary reports.

As you can see, the above narration denies the occurrence of *Badā'* if, by this, it is meant that God's knowledge changes and God becomes aware of something that He was not previously aware of. In fact, the doctrine of *Badā'* in these narrations only suggests a manifestation of a decree from God that runs contrary to expectations, rather than an actual change in His knowledge or essence. It is the erasing of the original decree and the establishment of a new one, with God having foreknowledge of both of both.

This is a truth that no rational individual can deny. When anticipating events, two potentialities or realities are envisioned: one determined by the incomplete causes, such as conditions, causes, or obstacles that can be

contravened, and another determined by the complete causes and reasons. This latter existence is fixed, unconditional, and cannot be contravened, unlike the first.

The two books referred to by the discussed verse—namely the book of erasure and affirmation and the Mother Book (*Umm al-Kitāb*) either represent these two stages of existence or serve as the foundations for them. Regardless, the matter that a decree or a will from God manifests contrary to what was expected is a clear issue, leaving no room for doubt.

It appears to us that the dispute regarding the doctrine of *Badā'*—as derived from the traditions of the Imāms of the Ahl al-Bayt—between those who affirm it and those who deny it, is in actually a debate about terminology and semantics that dissipates with the slightest degree of scrutiny. For this reason, we did not allocate a separate discussion for this matter in this book, even though our approach has been to devote a discussion to each scholarly issue.

Our rationale for asserting that the dispute about *Badā'* is semantic stems from the fact that those who reject this doctrine argue that affirming it implies a change in God's knowledge. Yet this implication applies to our human understanding of *Badā'*, where it might suggest a change in our knowledge. However, *Badā'* in the sense presented in the traditions of the Prophet's Household does not present such a problem.

(9) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Suyūṭī quotes al-Ḥākim, who narrates from Abū al-Dardā' that the Messenger of Allah recited the verse, *Allah effaces and confirms* (yuthbit) *whatever He wishes* ... (13:39), without stressing the *-b-* on *yuthbit*.

Author's comment: There are also a number of traditions that suggest that the passage, *Have they not seen how We visit the land diminishing it at its edges?* (13:41) refers to the death of learned and virtuous individuals.

(10) In the same source, Ibn Mardawayh is cited, he quotes Abū Hurayra as saying that the Messenger of Allah said concerning the verse, *Have they not seen how We visit the land diminishing it at its edges?*, that it refers to the death of scholars.

(11) In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, it is narrated from Abū ʿAbd Allāh that the verse refers to the death of scholars, jurists, and the righteous.

(12) In *al-Kāfī*, with its chain of narrators from Muḥammad b. ʿAlī from Jābir from Abū Jaʿfar, a.s., it is reported that ʿAlī b.

> Al-Ḥusayn, used to say that he felt relieved in his soul concerning the hastening of death or martyrdom in his family due to Allah the Almighty's statement, *Have they not seen how We visit the land diminishing it at its edges?* He said: 'It refers to the loss of scholars.'

Author's comment: It seems that the intended meaning is that he felt relieved in his soul because God Almighty attributed the demise of scholars to Himself and not to someone else; thus, he found solace in death or martyrdom because it was in the hands of God.

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Verse 43

The verse concludes the chapter and reiterates the message of its opening, which states: *That which has been sent down to you from your Lord is the truth, but most people do not believe* (13:1). This verse is the third repetition in response to those who deny the authenticity of God's Book, emphasizing that God Himself testifies to the truth of the message, and anyone who has knowledge of this Book also bears witness to it.

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ لَسْتَ مُرْسَلاً قُلْ كَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ
وَمَنْ عِندَهُ عِلْمُ الْكِتَابِ ﴿٤٣﴾

(13:43) The faithless say, 'You have not been sent.' Say, 'Allah suffices as a witness between me and you, and he who possesses the knowledge of the Book.'

The discourse of this chapter is built upon their denial of the authenticity of the Book and their rejection of it as a sign of the Prophet's divine mission. Consequently, they demanded from the Prophet a sign other than the one presented to them. As illustrated in this chapter, this sentiment has been repeatedly conveyed by the disbelievers, leading God to respond by effectively redirecting their words back at them. Upon hearing this response and despairing of receiving a different sign, they inevitably denied the very foundation of prophethood because they refused to accept the Qur'an as a divine sign and no other sign was presented to them. Thus, they declared, *'You have not been sent.'*

God instructs His Prophet to respond with the phrase, *'Allah suffices as a witness between me and you, and he who possesses the knowledge of the Book,'* as a definitive argument against them. This is not just a rhetorical address; it does not merely reference something whose knowledge is inaccessible to them.

The phrase, *Say, 'Allah suffices as a witness between me and you ...,'* invokes God Almighty to testify as a witness, as He is the ultimate authority over the matter of prophethood. In this context, the testimony signifies

an assertive declaration, not mere passive acknowledgment. This is clear since phrases such as, *you are indeed one of the messengers, on a straight path* (36:3) occur repeatedly in the Qur'an, establishing beyond all doubt that it is supposed to be a clear and miraculous sign of prophethood. This divine origin further reinforces the recognition of prophethood, especially given the universally trusted implications. The testimony contained in the verse refers precisely to this kind of knowledge-based declaration.

Some Qur'anic commentators view the 'divine testimony' as God providing such compelling evidence and proofs of the prophethood of the Seal of the Prophets that it renders additional witnesses unnecessary. This interpretation considers 'establishing evidence,' an action, as a form of 'testimony'—usually a verbal declaration. This metaphorical reading equates the act of providing evidence with giving testimony, potentially with even greater impact and effectiveness. While this interpretation aligns with our understanding of the verse, it appears that the commentator is reaching the right conclusion but perhaps through the wrong path.

This is because the evidence pointing to the truth of the prophethood of the Last Prophet either stems from the Qur'an—an eternal miracle in itself—or from other supernatural feats and miracles outside the Qur'an. As you observe, the verses of this chapter do not address the demands of the disbelievers with the latter. However, while it does not respond in this manner, it does not mean that the same route cannot be used for testimony. Thus, the testimony invoked in this verse undoubtedly points to the Qur'an. The reference to the Qur'an arises from its status as both a miraculous sign and a testament to the authenticity of the Prophet's mission. That is, it is the Word of God that testifies to His mission. Considering that the Qur'an is invoked as testimony, and it is both a miracle and a form of speech, there's no reason to understand the idea of God giving testimony as a metaphorical statement that refers to His other acts.

Furthermore, one cannot argue that God's action is a stronger evidence for this than His speech.

Consequently, from this, the conclusion must be that the meaning of the phrase, '*Allah suffices as a witness between me and you*,' is that whatever is stated in the Qur'an concerning the affirmation of the prophetic mission is divine testimony to that mission.

It may also be understood that the meaning of His saying: *Allah suffices*

as a witness between me and you is that what has occurred in the Qur'an regarding the affirmation of the message is a divine attestation to that.

However, if we understand 'testimony' here to mean 'bearing witness,' we entirely distort the meaning of the verse. This is because bearing witness in this context means seeing, observing, and knowing an occurrence. It makes no sense to relate the matter under discussion, that is, the truth of the prophetic mission of that esteemed figure, to God's knowledge and to use God's knowledge as an argument against an adversary. After all, the adversary has no access to God's knowledge to discern whether God's messenger speaks the truth or falsely attributes claims to God.

As for His saying: *and he who possesses the knowledge of the Book*, this means that it is sufficient for the one with the knowledge of the Book to be a witness between me and you. Some have mentioned that 'the Book' referred to here is the preserved tablet, and in this case, the intended meaning of the relative pronoun must be God Almighty, as if it was said: 'It is enough for God, who possesses the knowledge of the Book, to be a witness,' and so on.

However, there are two problems: first, it contradicts the apparent conjunction, for initially, it mentions that God suffices as a witness and this does not need any repetition. Secondly, according to this interpretation, God's essence and attributes are connected to His essence, which is stylistically unsuitable and not eloquent. That is why al-Zamakhsharī, when he transmitted this opinion in his work *al-Kashshāf* from al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, saying: 'No, by Allah, it only means Allah,' he added: 'The meaning is that it is sufficient for the one who is worthy of worship and for the one who knows the knowledge of what is in the tablet except for Him to be a witness between me and you.' Hence, he tried to rectify the issue by replacing God's proper name '*Allāh*' with 'the One worthy of worship' and replacing 'who' with 'the one' so that the conjoined objects would become two attributes, meaning the conjoining of one essential attribute with the other, and attributing the ruling of the essence with what is in both descriptions, as if they were included in it.

However, merely translating a phrase that does not convey a direct meaning to another phrase that does so, does not imply that the initial expression is accurate or meaningful. If this argument holds universally, then the principles of linguistic expressions become void, rendering every

incorrect statement correct and every correct statement incorrect.

Further, if one scrutinizes what we mentioned regarding the meaning of this testimony and recognizes that its intent is to affirm the Qur'an's confirmation of the prophethood of the Seal of the Prophets, then one will understand that the term 'Allah' is not taken in the descriptive sense as al-Zamakhsharī interpreted it. Instead, it refers to the essence of the Almighty God, and the testimony is ascribed to His sacred essence, encompassing all perfect attributes, as the testimony of such an entity surpasses any other testimony. This aligns with what the Qur'an says: *Say, 'What thing is greatest as witness?' Say, 'Allah is the witness between me and you...'* (6:19). Some have argued that the reference to '*the Book*' in this verse means the Torah and the Gospel or just the Torah. They claim that scholars of these scriptures suffice as witnesses between us, as they are aware of the prophecies regarding me in their books and have read my characteristics therein.

It should be emphasized that the verse focuses on testimony rather than mere knowledge and, since this is a Meccan chapter, it is said that none of the scholars of the People of the Book had yet believed or borne witness to the message at the time. Thus, there is no point in arguing by referring to a testimony that no one had yet upheld.

Some argue that the verse refers to those among the scholars of the People of the Book who had embraced Islam, such as ʿAbd Allāh b. Salām, Tamīm al-Dāri, al-Jārūd, and Salmān al-Fārsī. It is also said that the intended individual is ʿAbd Allāh b. Salām, but this is countered by the fact that the chapter in question is Meccan and these individuals only embraced Islam after the Prophet and his followers had emigrated to Medina.

For those who assert that the reference is to ʿAbd Allāh b. Salām, they present a strong defense arguing that the Meccan origin of the chapter does not necessarily contradict the possibility of some verses being Medinan. They ask why it is not possible for this particular verse to be Medinan while the chapter as a whole remains Meccan.

Firstly, merely the possibility that a particular verse might have been revealed in Medina is not proof that it was indeed revealed there, unless there's a credible narration supporting this assumption. Furthermore, it has been noted that the commentators have explicitly stated that this chapter was revealed in Mecca.

Secondly, while it is true that some Meccan chapters contain Medinan verses, such instances involve the insertion of Medinan verses within Meccan chapters, not like the verse in question which is located at the end of the chapter, connected to its beginning verses. It is implausible for interconnected verses to be separated by several years.

Some have argued: What is the issue if the verse under discussion is also Meccan and references scholars who would later embrace Islam in Medina and bear witness to the truthfulness of the Prophet's mission?

The response to this is that it undermines the argument. It does not make sense for the Meccans, who challenged the prophethood saying '*you have not been sent*,' to be told: 'Accept him today without evidence; the evidence will come later when some scholars from the People of the Book embrace Islam and testify to his mission.' Therefore, it is not possible that the Meccan verse refers to 'Abd Allāh b. Salām or other Jewish and Christian scholars who did not believe at the time of its revelation.

Others have argued that the testimony mentioned is one of bearing witness, and it is not necessary for the witness to be a believer at the time of giving the testimony. (What is essential is the knowledge of the witness, not his or her faith.) Therefore, the verse could be Meccan, referring to someone like 'Abd Allāh bin Salām or other scholars from the Jews and Christians, even if they had not converted when the verse was revealed.

The problem with this viewpoint is that, in this case, the verse's argument would rely on the knowledge of the People of the Book, even if those scholars had not yet acknowledged the Prophet's mission or believed in him. If this line of reasoning was valid, then there would be a basis for arguing using the knowledge of the disbelievers themselves, since this would represent a decisive argument against them, as it would mean that they undoubtedly had knowledge that the Qur'an is the word of God Almighty. So, what then prompted the usage of the knowledge of the People of the Book as evidence, especially when both the idolaters and the People of the Book denied the Prophet's divine mission? Furthermore, as we have mentioned already, the testimony invoked in the verse is one of attesting to a fact, not merely bearing witness to an event.

Some scholars, among them, namely Ibn Taymiyya, have made a peculiar claim, asserting that this verse, in its entirety, was revealed in Medina, even though there is no evidence for such an occurrence.

Others have posited that the term 'the Book' refers to the Qur'an itself. The interpretation is that anyone who has comprehended this book, gained knowledge from it, and delved into it, stands as a witness that the Qur'an is indeed from God. Moreover, I, as the messenger, also affirm its divine origin. Consequently, the conclusion of the chapter links back to its beginning, where it was declared: *These are the signs of the Book. That which has been sent down to you from your Lord is the truth, but most people do not believe* (13:1). The end of the chapter also alludes to its middle, stating: "So is the one who knows that what has been revealed to you from your Lord is the truth like one who is blind? Only those of understanding will remember."

Some scholars have suggested that the verse refers to the Qur'an itself. The meaning would be that whoever bears the responsibility for it and attains true knowledge and specialization in it shall testify that it is from God and that the Prophet is sent with it. In this way, the conclusion of the chapter would coincide with its opening statement: *These are the verses of the Book; and that which has been sent down to you from your Lord is the truth, but most people do not believe* (13:1). The end would then correspond to the beginning and to the central message of the chapter, stating: *Is someone who knows that what has been sent down to you from your Lord is the truth, like someone who is blind? Only those who possess intellect take admonition* (13:19).

This statement by the Almighty essentially serves to defend the Qur'an and support its authenticity, especially in the face of the insults made by the disbelievers, who repeatedly demanded, '*Why has a sign not been sent down to him from his Lord?*' and '*You have not been sent!*'

Indeed, to convey this particular meaning, it would have been apt for the verse to clearly indicate that the Qur'an is the greatest sign of prophethood. However, it states: *'Allah suffices as a witness between me and you, and he who possesses the knowledge of the Book.'* (13:43) in order to fulfill this essential purpose. This is one of the best pieces of evidence that the verse, like the rest of the chapter, is Meccan.

This supports what has been mentioned by numerous reports from various sources, referencing the Imāms of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), that this verse was revealed about 'Alī. If the saying, '*and he who possesses the knowledge of the Book*' applied to anyone who believed in the

Prophet at that time, it would mean that he was the most knowledgeable of the community in the Book of God. This fact is supported by numerous authentic reports. Even if there was nothing else but the statement of the Prophet in the widely reported *Ḥadīth al-Thaqalayn*, which stated, 'They will not separate until they join me at the Pool,' this would be sufficient evidence for such a reading. The full text of the tradition, which is narrated by both Sunni and Shi'i sources reads: 'Indeed, I am leaving among you two precious things: The Book of God (*Kitāb Allāh*) and my progeny, the People of my House (*'Itratī Ahl Baytī*). The two shall never part until they come to me by the Pool. If you hold onto them both, you will never go astray after me.'

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, al-Ṣaffār relates through his chain of transmission from Abū Ḥamza al-Thumālī, from Abū Ja'far al-Bāqir that the verse refers to 'Alī.

Author's comment: It is also narrated through various chains of transmitters from Jābir, Abū Ja'far, Burayd b. Mu'āwiya, Fuḍayl b. Yasār, 'Abd Allāh b. Bukayr, 'Abd Allāh b. Kathīr al-Hāshimī, Abū 'Abd Allāh, and from Salmān al-Fārsī, saying that this verse relates to 'Alī.

(2) In *al-Kāfī,* al-Kulaynī narrates via Burayd b. Mu'āwiya: 'The verse refers to us, and 'Alī is the first and the best among us, and the most virtuous after the Prophet.'

(3) In *Ma'ānī al-akhbār*, al-Ṣadūq narrates via his chain of transmission from Khalf b. 'Aṭiyya al-'Awfī, from Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī: 'I asked the Messenger of God about God's words, "*and he who possesses the knowledge of the Book*." He replied: This is the executor of the will of my brother, Solomon son of David. I said to him, "O Messenger of God, what about God's statement, *Allah suffices as a witness between me and you, and he who possesses the knowledge of the Book* (13:43). He replied: That is my brother, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib."'

(4) In *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, it is narrated from 'Abd Allāh b. 'Aṭā', who said: 'I asked Abū Ja'far about this son of 'Abd Allāh b. Salām b. 'Imrān who claims that his father is the one referred to in the verse: *Say, "Allah suffices as a witness between me and you, and he who possesses the knowledge of the Book."* He replied: "He speaks false,

it is in reference to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib."'

(5) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, it is narrated from Ibn Shahrāshūb who cited from Muḥammad b. Muslim, Abū Ḥamza al-Thumālī, Jābir b. Yazīd from Abū Jaʿfar, and from ʿAlī b. Faḍḍāl, Fāḍil b. Dāwūd from Abū Baṣīr, from al-Ṣādiq, as well as from Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Kalbi and Muḥammad b. al-Fuḍayl from al-Riḍā. It is also narrated from Mūsā b. Jaʿfar, from Zayd b. ʿAlī, from Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya, from Salmān al-Fārsī and from Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī and Ismāʿīl al-Sudayy, who all said that the verse: *Say, 'Allah suffices as a witness between me and you, and he who possesses the knowledge of the Book*' refers to ʿAlī b. Abū Ṭālib.

(6) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, it is also narrated from al-Thaʿālabī in his *tafsīr*, with his chain of narrators from Muʿāwiya, from al-Aʿmash, from Abū Ṣāliḥ, from Ibn ʿAbbās. It is also narrated from ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAṭā' from Abū Jaʿfar, that someone said to him that the person referred to in the verse was ʿAbd Allāh b. Salām. He responded: 'No, it is ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.' Additionally, it is narrated that Saʿīd b. Jubayr was asked if the verse refers to ʿAbd Allāh b. Salām, to which he replied: 'No, how could it be when this chapter is a Meccan one?'

Author's comment: Note that this narration has also been reported in *al-Durr al-manthūr*, by Saʿīd b. Manṣūr, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, and Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and by al-Naḥḥās in his *Kitāb al-naskh*, from Ibn Jubayr.

(7) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, it is likewise narrated from the jurist Ibn al-Maghāzilī al-Shāfiʿī, with his chain of narrators from ʿAlī b. ʿAbbās, who said: 'Abū Maryam and I visited ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAṭā'. He said: 'Oh Abū Maryam, narrate to ʿAlī the hadith you told me from Abū Jaʿfar.' He said: 'I was sitting with Abū Jaʿfar when the son of ʿAbd Allāh b. Salām passed by. I said: 'May I be a ransom for you, this is the son of the one who possesses knowledge of the Book.' He replied: 'No, but it is your companion ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, about whom verses from the Book of Allah the Almighty have been revealed: *and he who possesses the knowledge of the Book*, *Is he who stands on a manifest proof from his Lord, and whom a witness of his own follows*, *Your guardian is only Allah, His Messenger, and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give the zakat while*

bowing down. (13:43; 11:17; 5:55).'

(8) In *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Mardawayh reported a narration through the chain of ʿAbd al-Malik b. ʿUmayr that Muḥammad b. Yusuf b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Salām said: "Abd Allāh b. Salām said that God had revealed a verse in the Qur'an about him: '*Allah suffices as a witness between me and you, and he who possesses the knowledge of the Book.*'

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Author's comment: a similar narration has been reported from Ibn Mardawayh through Zayd b. Aslam from his father, and from Jundub. The status of the narration and its meaning has already been mentioned earlier. Moreover, it has been narrated from Ibn al-Mundhir from al-Shaʿbī: 'Nothing of the Qur'an was revealed about ʿAbd Allāh b. Salām!'

End of Chapter 13 & Volume 22

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About the Author

The late Islamic scholar, thinker, and philosopher, ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī came from the celebrated Ṭabāṭabāʾī family of Tabriz. For the last three centuries, this family has produced generation after generation of renowned religious scholars in Azerbaijan (Iran). They are descendants of the second Imam, al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī (peace be on both of them). The clan is also referred to with the title, al-Qāḍī.

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was the son of al-Sayyid Muḥammad b. al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī. ʿAllāmah was born in Tabriz on 29 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1321/17 March 1904. His father died in 1330 (1912). The orphaned child grew up in Tabriz, and after completing his religious education there, around 1341 (1923), he went to Najaf (Iraq), the most important center of Shia religious learning.

In Najaf, he began his higher studies with such illustrious scholars as Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Nāʾīnī al-Gharawī (1277–1355/1860 or 1861–1936), the son of Shaykh al-Islām ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, and Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Gharawī al-Iṣfahānī (1296–1361/1878–1942), the son of al-Ḥājj Muḥammad Ḥasan, Muʿīn al-Tujjār.

These two were among the most prominent scholars in the Shia world. They were among the most prominent scholars not only in the fields of Shia jurisprudence and principles of jurisprudence, but in all Islamic subjects. Their opinions and theories are still followed today. Each founded his own school of thought and trained thousands of Shia scholars and jurists; and all the *marājiʿ al-taqlīd*[1] of the Shia world, to this day, are their students. Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Gharawī al-Iṣfahānī was a philosopher, unsurpassed in his time; a man of literature; and a poet in Arabic and Persian; he was a genius whose achievements made others look up to him as their ideal. Shaykh Nāʾīnī, with his bold opinions and decrees in the political and social life of the Muslim *umma*, has carved for himself a niche in history.

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1 The highest authorities of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) whose rulings are followed by others.

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was much influenced by these two teachers, particularly by al-Iṣfahānī, in the development of his thought and knowledge. A third influence was that of al-Sayyid Abū al-Qāsim Jaʿfar Khwānsārī (1313– 80/1895 or 1896–1961), the son of al-Sayyid Muḥammad al-Mūsāwī, known as "the mathematician." ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was proud to have studied mathematics with him, and also wrote a book on higher mathematics, in which he applied some special theories of his teacher.

ʿAllāmah studied philosophy and metaphysics from al-Sayyid Ḥusayn al-Ḥusaynī Bādkūbahʾī; the latter was a student of al-Sayyid Riḍā, who studied with al-Sayyid Mūsā, a well-known teacher of philosophy and related subjects. In the fields of ethics and spirituality, ʿAllāmah received his training from his relatives, al-Sayyid ʿAlī al-Qāḍī (1285–1366/1869–1947), a well-known scholar who established a school of spiritual and ethical training which still flourishes today.

All these influences combined to create in ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī a well-balanced academic and spiritual personality. He was a well-respected authority on religious subjects of jurisprudence and its fundamentals; a philosopher of independent views and new theories; and an inspired model of ethical and spiritual perfection. He not only taught morality, but also lived it. Yet it is also correct to state that his scholarship was overshadowed by his fame and prestige as a philosopher and a spiritual man.

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī returned to Tabriz in 1353/1934, where he was welcomed as a religious scholar. There he spent his time teaching higher philosophy to willing disciples—but it was a small place for his talents. In 1364/1945 he migrated to Qum, the most important center of religious education in Iran. In Qum, he remained engaged in imparting the knowledge of ethics, philosophy, and the exegesis of the Qur'an to those students who had already attained a high level of erudition. There he remained until his death on Sunday, 18 Muḥarram 1402/15 November 1981. May God bestow His mercy on him. Amen.

Many religious leaders of the present generation were and are among his students and disciples, the most famous being the late Murtaḍā Muṭahharī (1338–99/1920–79).

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī's fame rests on his academic works—the most important being his great exegesis of the Qur'an, *al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān.* It is said to be the foundation stone of the academic prestige which ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was accorded in the Muslim world.

Among his other works is *Uṣūl-i falsafah va ravish-i ri'alism* [Practical and Philosophical Principles of Realism]. This book is a comparative study of Islamic philosophy and various modern anti-Islamic schools of thoughts, especially Marxism. His disciple, the late Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, annotated this work, thus making it easily accessible to the average man.

A third book, *Shi'a dār Islām*, was first published in Persian; later it was published in English with the title, *Shi'ite Islam.* The 'Allāmah wrote this book on the request of Professor Kenneth Morgan of Colgate University, to introduce Shiism to the West.

However, it is his *tafsīr, al-Mīzān* (published in 20 volumes in Arabic) which presents the true picture of the author's academic style and his way of thinking. In the preface to volume 1, the author outlines his plan, to explain the Qur'an with the help of the Qur'an itself. This he faithfully does, all the way through to the end of the *tafsīr*.

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